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Modern Dual Power in the United States: A Synthesis of Lenin, Mao, and Deng

Wade T. Paton[1]

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1. Wade T. Paton is a U.S. Army veteran and former intelligence analyst who became a dedicated anti-imperialist upon leaving military service. A qualified paralegal specialist, he has applied his legal training in direct support of labor struggles, offering both legal assistance and strategic coordination to working-class campaigns. His activism spans multiple sectors, with a particular focus on organizing logistics and transportation workers, and he has contributed significantly to unionization efforts and the formation of worker-led cooperatives. As an entrepreneur, he's led multiple disaster relief efforts to the victims of Hurricane Katrina and most recently helped deliver critical aid to the areas of North Carolina hardest hit by Hurricane Helene. Wade was elected to the Central Committee of the American Communist Party (ACP), where he helps shape national political strategy and contributes to the development of dual power initiatives. As both a cadre organizer and theoretician, he bridges practical struggle with revolutionary discipline, rooted in Marxist-Leninist principles. Prior to joining the ACP he was a minor contributing author to Midwestern Marx. He is a proud husband, a father of two, and an unwavering advocate for working-class internationalism.

Lenin's Concept of Dual Power

Vladimir Lenin didn't mince words about revolution: you must build a new power alongside the old and be ready to topple the old regime when it falters. In 1917, he observed exactly that in Russia – workers' councils (Soviets) emerging next to the weak Provisional Government.[2] These Soviets were more than protest committees; they were an embryonic government of workers and soldiers, providing local governance and services and steadily gaining legitimacy. Lenin's Bolsheviks cultivated this parallel power, organizing the Soviets and positioning the Bolshevik Party as the disciplined vanguard leading the working class. The game plan was clear: create organs of people's power under capitalist rule, serve the people through those organs, and when the time is ripe, replace the bourgeois state. Lenin insisted (notably in *State and Revolution*) that the existing capitalist state machinery could not just be "taken over" – it had to be smashed and replaced with institutions of the proletariat.[3] But until that revolutionary climax, the task was to grow those alternative institutions (councils, committees, worker militias) within the old system. In short, Lenin's contribution to our strategy is dual power 101: nurture a second, socialist government in the shell of the old, so that when the crisis comes, the capitalist state can be swept aside and the workers' state can step in. He first called this scenario "dual power," and it remains the foundation of our approach today – don't just fight the state; build a new one under its nose.[4]

Mao's Mass Line and Revolutionary Base Areas

Mao Zedong took Lenin's dual-power concept and applied it to the vast Chinese countryside, amplifying the role of the masses. During the Chinese Revolution, Mao's Communist movement didn't confine itself to urban centers; it established liberated base areas in rural regions. For example, the Yan'an Soviet was a rural revolutionary base established by the Chinese Communist Party (CPC) in the 1930s and 1940s, serving as a practical application of Mao Zedong's dual power strategy. In these liberated zones, the CPC built grassroots governance by providing tangible services such as land reform, education, and basic healthcare. Party members worked alongside peasants, opened village

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2. Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, "The Dual Power," in *Lenin Collected Works*, Vol. 24 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), 38–41

3. Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, "The State and Revolution," in *Lenin Collected Works*, Vol. 25 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), 463–65.

4. Ibid, 38-41.

schools, deployed mobile clinics, and redistributed land, earning legitimacy by materially improving daily life. This "serve the people" approach not only met urgent needs but also undermined the Nationalist government's credibility, as many locals came to view the CPC's local institutions as more legitimate and responsive than the distant regime in Chongqing.[5] Mao also pioneered the Mass Line, a method where the party listens to the needs and ideas of the masses at the grassroots, then formulates policies to address those needs, and goes back to the people to mobilize them for implementation. This ensured the parallel institutions had broad support – they were *of* the people, not just for show. Mao's experience adds two key lessons to dual power strategy:

- A revolution must improve people's daily lives in areas where the state fails – this wins hearts and minds more effectively than any propaganda.
- Dual power can be protracted – Mao's base areas persisted for years, expanding and strengthening, until the CPC was powerful enough to win nationwide. In other words, you don't necessarily flip the system overnight; you build dual power over time so that when you finally confront the old state head-on, you've already got liberated zones and a loyal mass base. Mao showed that revolution is as much about *feeding kids and fighting illiteracy* as it is about guns – and that makes his model essential to our synthesis.[6]

Deng Xiaoping's Pragmatism and Dual Economy

Fast forward to post-revolutionary China – Deng Xiaoping offers a different but complementary angle. Deng led China in the late 1970s and 1980s with a famously pragmatic approach to socialism. His mantra — *"it doesn't matter if a cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice,"* — symbolizes his pragmatic approach to socialism. [7] Rather than rigidly adhering to ideological

5. Robin Whitehead, "1936-48: The Yan'an Soviet," *History: From One Student to Another* (March 31, 2025): https://www.historyfromonestudenttoanother.com/as-level-international-history-1870-1945/china-and-japan-1912-1945/1936-1948-the-yanan-soviet

6. Mao Zedong, "Serve the People," in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Vol. 3 (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1967), 227–28.

7. Chen Jian, "From Mao to Deng: China's Changing Relations with the United States," *Wilson Center* (November 2019): https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/mao-deng-chinas-changing-relations-united-states

purity, Deng prioritized results: using market mechanisms and capitalist tools to develop China's economy while maintaining Communist Party control. For revolutionary movements, the lesson is clear — practical success in building power and improving lives can justify unconventional methods, so long as the ultimate goal of socialism remains intact. What can a revolutionary movement in the U.S. learn from this? A 21st-century socialist movement would not hesitate to run enterprises, embrace modern tech, or even use market competition to grow our alternative economy. Use the "cat" (the market) to catch mice (build wealth and capacity for the movement), but don't let the cat go feral and start eating the revolution.[8]

Synthesizing the Foundations

Our modern dual power strategy is essentially Marxism-Leninism with Maoist and Dengist characteristics. From Lenin we take the insistence on building a parallel state and the endgame of replacing the bourgeois state entirely. From Mao we take the principle of deep integration with the masses – creating base areas, serving the people's needs directly, and patiently growing power from the ground up. From Deng we take an unromantic pragmatism – we will use *any* economic tools or forms that work to strengthen the people's cause, whether that looks traditionally "socialist" or not, as long as it moves us toward our goal. In practice, this means one unified revolutionary party will build up alternative institutions of governance *and* a new economy within the shell of the old. Over time, these institutions should gain capacity and legitimacy to the point that, when systemic crisis hits or the ruling class falters, this modern dual power can step forward as the viable successor. Think of it as an updated revolutionary playbook: Lenin's bold plan for smashing the state, plus Mao's focus on the people, plus Deng's focus on results. All three strands woven together give us a strategy that is both visionary and grounded in real, on-the-ground work.

Current U.S. Economic and Political Contradictions

To apply a dual power strategy in the United States, we must understand the key contradictions of the capitalist system — persistent failures that expose its

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8. Human Rights Watch, "China: Tiananmen Injustice Fuels Repression 30 Years On," *Human Rights Watch* (May 30, 2019): https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/05/30/china-tiananmen-injustice-fuels-repression-30-years

inability to meet the needs of the people. These contradictions are not abstract; they are lived realities that justify the creation of alternative institutions. Dual power doesn't just oppose the state — it steps in where the state has already failed.

Economic Inequality and Legitimacy Crisis

The United States is a country of staggering wealth and staggering inequality. As of recent years, about 700 U.S. billionaires collectively held over $4.7 trillion in wealth — a figure that soared by nearly 60% during the COVID-19 pandemic.[9] Meanwhile, nearly 140 million Americans — roughly 43% of the population — live in poverty or are classified as low-income.[10] The richest 1% control around one-third of the nation's total wealth, while millions live paycheck to paycheck, one emergency away from disaster.[11]

This gap between abundance and deprivation is a glaring indictment of the capitalist system. The government has proven unwilling or unable to correct it. Tax policy favors capital over labor, with billionaires often paying lower effective tax rates than their workers. During the pandemic, while wealth at the top exploded, meaningful redistribution efforts were minimal. Welfare programs remain insufficient, housing is unaffordable for many, and food insecurity persists despite the country wasting millions of tons of food each year.

These failures fuel a broader crisis of political legitimacy. The formal democracy of the United States masks a system dominated by money. Billionaires and corporations routinely pour massive sums into elections and lobbying efforts, effectively purchasing policy outcomes. Issues of public concern — healthcare affordability, climate action, labor protections — are sidelined, while unpopular policies like tax breaks for the wealthy are implemented with bipartisan support. Voter turnout is low, and among those

9. Americans for Tax Fairness, "Pandemic Profits: Billionaires' Wealth Grew $1.7 Trillion, or 58%, During Three Years of the Public Health Emergency," *Americans for Tax Fairness* (May 16, 2023): https://americansfortaxfairness.org/pandemic-profits-billionaires-wealth-grew-1-7-trillion-three-years-public-health-emergency/

10. Poor People's Campaign, "There Are 140 Million Poor and Low-Income People in the U.S.," *Poor People's Campaign* (April 2022): https://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/140-million-maps/

11. Anna Marie D. Lee, "Most Americans Can't Afford a $1,000 Emergency Expense," *CBS News* (April 2025): https://www.cbsnews.com/news/saving-money-emergency-expenses-2025/

who do vote, faith in the system is thin. Many Americans feel their voices don't matter — a fertile ground for dual power to take root as an alternative that actually listens and acts.[12]

Social Failures: Healthcare, Housing, and the Breakdown of Services

Beyond economic injustice, the U.S. also fails in delivering core social services — despite outspending much of the world. Healthcare is the most glaring example. The U.S. spends nearly 18% of its GDP on healthcare — more than any other high-income country — yet outcomes are among the worst: lower life expectancy, higher infant mortality, and millions uninsured or underinsured. In 2022, over 26 million people had no health insurance at all. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted this dysfunction dramatically, with overwhelmed hospitals and exorbitant medical bills alongside surging corporate profits.[13]

Similarly, education and housing are areas of glaring disconnect between resources and results. The United States is capable of providing excellent schools and ample housing, yet public schools in many working-class and poor communities are severely underfunded, and affordable housing is in crisis.[14] We see schools where teachers have to buy supplies out of pocket, in a country that can spend trillions on fighter jets. We see cities with tens of thousands of vacant luxury condos but also tens of thousands of homeless people.[15] Infrastructure is another failure: bridges collapse, water systems poison communities (the Flint water crisis exposed thousands to lead-tainted water due to government negligence and cost-cutting), and public transit in many cities is

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12. Americans For Tax Fairness, "Pandemic Profits: Billionaires Wealth Grew $1.7 Trillion During Three Years of the Public Health Emergency," *Americans For Tax Fairness* (March 18, 2023): https://americansfortaxfairness.org/pandemic-profits-billionaires-wealth-grew-1-7-trillion-three-years-public-health-emergency/

13. Jacqueline Howard, "US Spends Most on Health Care but Has Worst Health Outcomes among High-Income Countries, New Report Finds," *CNN*, January 31, 2023: https://www.cnn.com/2023/01/31/health/us-health-care-spending-outcomes/index.html

14. Amanda Litvinov, "Out-of-Pocket Spending on School Supplies Adds to Strain on Educators," *NEA Today* (October 14, 2022): https://www.nea.org/nea%E2%80%91today/all%E2%80%91news%E2%80%91articles/out%E2%80%91pocket%E2%80%91spending%E2%80%91school%E2%80%91supplies%E2%80%91adds%E2%80%91strain%E2%80%91educators

15. United Way NCA, "How Many Houses Are in the U.S.? – Vacant Homes vs. Homelessness by City," *United Way NCA* (2025): https://unitedwaynca.org/blog/vacant-homes-vs-homelessness-by-city/

deficient or nonexistent.[16] All this happens while enormous sums are spent on the military and corporate subsidies. The pattern is clear – the *state serves capital first, people second.* When budgets are allocated, public health, education, and housing take a back seat to bank bailouts, tax cuts for the wealthy, and ever-increasing Pentagon budgets. The result is a populace that is materially insecure in the midst of plenty.[17]

The Political Economy's Illegitimacy Crisis

For a dual power movement, this is both a humanitarian challenge and a strategic opportunity. Where the state cannot or will not provide basic services, we will. Organizing free health clinics, mutual aid food programs, community-run schools or tutoring programs, and cooperative housing initiatives directly addresses these failures. By doing so, the movement not only relieves suffering but also demonstrates a viable alternative: it shows people that a government of the people (even an unofficial one) would prioritize their well-being instead of treating them as collateral damage. When residents see a volunteer community clinic or a tenants' union fixing up homes when City Hall wouldn't, it starts building loyalty toward the new institutions.

The current crisis of political legitimacy is fertile ground for dual power. If people perceive the official government as unresponsive or illegitimate, they will be more open to grassroots, community-based leadership. The construction of a dual power system can present itself as *truly democratic and accountable* in contrast to the spectacle of bought-and-paid-for politicians. By organizing popular assemblies, tenant unions, workplace committees, and other forms of direct democracy at the local level, the movement gives people a real voice in decisions that affect them. Imagine neighborhoods convening their own councils to decide on community projects, or workers in an area forming a labor assembly to coordinate demands on employers – all independent of the formal city council or Congress. Over time, these forms of genuine participation can win people's confidence. When folks see that a neighborhood assembly led by activists actually solved the pothole problem on their street or

16. Josh Sanburn, " 'Series of Government Failures' Blamed for Flint Water Crisis," *Time* (March 23, 2016): https://time.com/4269300/flint-task-force-report-water-crisis/

17. Michael Y. Park, "What Caused the Baltimore Key Bridge to Collapse and Are Other Bridges in Danger?," *Architectural Digest* (March 26, 2024): https://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/what-caused-the-baltimore-bridge-to-collapse-and-are-other-bridges-in-danger

set up a community garden, while the local government sat on its hands, the legitimacy starts to shift.

Strategy for Industrial Development within the Capitalist Framework

A core component of modern dual power is building an internal, socialist-oriented economy that operates right in the belly of the capitalist beast. We're talking about creating a network of industries, farming collectives, and services that function within the marketplace, but with a revolutionary purpose. The goal is to develop an independent material base – factories, farms, workshops, logistics – *controlled by the movement itself*. This parallel economy would serve immediate needs (jobs, affordable goods) and also lay the groundwork for a post-capitalist economy of the future. In essence, think of it as establishing revolutionary "base areas" in the economic realm: islands of socialist production in a capitalist ocean. Over time, we aim to connect and expand these islands until they form a new continent of economic power.

Vanguard-Led Economic Initiatives

A single visionary organization (the vanguard party) will spearhead and coordinate the growth of these enterprises. Following Leninist principles, the party provides centralized guidance and a long-term plan – ensuring that disparate projects all add up to an emergent socialist economy. The first step is picking our battles: identify critical needs and strategic industries where capitalism is either failing outright or exploiting people mercilessly. These are beachheads where dual power enterprises can gain support and out-compete the capitalist incumbents morally and eventually economically. For example, areas like *renewable energy* (where private companies often drag their feet if there's no quick profit), *affordable housing construction* (since developers focus on luxury condos), *healthcare equipment or medicine production* (to cut through Big Pharma's price-gouging), *sustainable agriculture and food distribution* (because agribusiness leaves food deserts and waste in its wake), or *internet and tech services in underserved rural/urban areas* (where telecom giants don't bother). The party would launch franchised businesses or non-profits targeting these needs. Importantly, each enterprise has a dual character: externally, it might look like a normal business – it's registered, it operates in the market, it

earns revenue. Internally, however, it is an instrument of the revolution. Party cadres embed within it to ensure it runs by socialist values and serves the community, not just itself. This echoes Deng's philosophy that markets are tools, not ends in themselves. We will use market competition as a weapon to strengthen the movement's economic base, but we will channel all surplus and success toward our social mission. In this way, we compete with capitalist firms on their turf yet subvert the logic of profit-maximization – every victory for our enterprise directly translates into expanded capacity to serve the people. Over time, as these initiatives multiply, we are seeding the core of a new socialist economy under the shell of the old.

Party Control and Franchise

The backbone of this internal economy will be party ownership. To differentiate ourselves from capitalist enterprise, we emphasize worker control. Party enterprises must be unionized and democratically governed. This ensures that wealth and decision-making stay in the hands of those who do the work, and that enterprises remain grounded in revolutionary goals. The party supports these businesses with shared services—legal aid, accounting, training—and links them together in a federated structure to ensure supply chain resilience and political alignment.

This federation vertically integrates internal trade and mutual support. A farm supplies a co-op grocery store; a union delivery service moves goods between party hubs. The aim is to build semi-autonomous circuits of production and distribution that can withstand economic shocks or political repression. This reduces dependence on hostile corporate infrastructure and makes our economy more durable over time.

There are many forms this can take. And in the ACP, there is no specific, set strategy yet declared. This is due to the experimental and pioneering nature of the party. And as such, I propose one such strategy be that the backbone of this internal economy could be structured as a radically different type of unionization for the worker base that gives workers ownership in party owned franchises. This allows the workers (owners in the franchise) to petition the party franchise in labor disputes (much like union members can negotiate or strike) while the head office of the party franchises serve the role that traditional head offices of unions do. A party controlled franchise will provide

subordinate owners in the franchise a legal office for assistance & arbitration services to handle owner disputes, healthcare, pension, accounting, marketing, education/training etc. In this type of configuration, party businesses would create a hybrid franchise/cooperative/union which would act almost like a privatized union that side-steps union busting legislation and forces imperial finance to attack its own profit making structures just to conduct lawfare against them.

This isn't just moral preference; it's strategic. Franchised unionization hard-wires our values (egalitarianism, democracy) into the economy we're building, ensuring it's fundamentally different from standard capitalism. The party can facilitate this by providing resources and coordination to new party franchise startups to help them survive. The goal being to absorb them into an ever growing franchise umbrella that vertically integrates each new startup so they can trade with each other and support one another. This federated approach means party industries won't be isolated little utopias at the mercy of Walmart and Amazon's supply chains – instead, they will increasingly source from and sell to each other. As this web thickens, we reduce reliance on hostile capitalist suppliers and build a self-contained circuit of production and distribution. Crucially, these enterprises also serve as employment for movement supporters. Every party member, every aligned member of the community the party hires/makes an owner is one less person dependent on a corporate boss – and one more person materially tied to the emerging socialist sector. Over time, jobs and livelihoods created by the dual power economy expand our base of support. And because these party franchise industries are explicitly oriented to community needs, the goods and services they produce directly benefit working-class neighborhoods. Each successful business is both a win for the people involved and a proof to the broader public that there is an alternative way to run an economy.

Parallel Supply Chains and Infrastructure

As more and more of these economic "nodes" pop up, one of the party's key roles is to connect them into a semi-autonomous network. Building isolated businesses isn't enough – we need a *parallel supply chain* and support infrastructure that knits them together into a coherent system. Practically, this means developing our own distribution channels, financing mechanisms, and even physical infrastructure that do not rely entirely on capitalist middlemen.

For distribution, the movement could set up party/union wholesale markets and retail outlets. For instance, a community-run grocery store (as mentioned) that sources from collective farms, or a network of street markets where union co-ops can sell directly. We could organize a party-run trucking or delivery business to transport goods between our enterprises, reducing dependence on UPS or Amazon logistics. It might sound far-fetched, but even a small fleet of trucks owned by the movement, prioritizing deliveries for interparty owned businesses, would be a huge step toward autonomy. We also consider storage and reserves: party-owned warehouses could stockpile essentials (food, medicine, tools) as a buffer for our communities during emergencies or supply shocks. Financially, we can expand on the idea of a movement-based credit union or mutual aid fund – essentially a bank of the revolution that recycles the savings of sympathetic members into low-interest loans or grants for new businesses and projects. This keeps capital circulating on "our side" instead of relying on Chase or Bank of America, who would gladly choke off funding to anti-capitalist enterprises. Over time, these connected enterprises start forming an *internal market* among themselves, with the party acting as the facilitator and planner. In the early stages, yes, all our businesses will still use U.S. dollars, pay taxes, interface with regular customers, etc. – we're not seceding to form an isolated enclave. But as the network grows, we can experiment with features of a socialist economy: for example, the party could introduce an internal ledger or credit system for transactions among party industries (so they trade goods based on a plan or mutual credit rather than pure market prices), or organize barter arrangements between friendly enterprises. We could even develop planning software to coordinate supply and demand among our industries, foreshadowing how a full socialist economy might allocate resources without a traditional market. The more self-sufficient and interlinked this counter-economy becomes, the more it can shield our communities from the whims of the capitalist market – whether that's price gouging, shortages, or recessions. This vision mirrors what revolutionary movements have done in the past on a regional scale (like the CCP's "liberated zones" trading internally during the Chinese Civil War). Here, we'd be doing it within a modern, highly developed context, which comes with new possibilities and challenges.

Industrial and Technological Focus

Building new industries from scratch is *difficult*, especially under hostile conditions. But we have advantages today that earlier revolutionaries didn't:

modern technology and knowledge are powerful levers if we use them creatively. A dual power economic strategy should aggressively leverage 21st-century tech to lower the barriers to entry for our enterprises. Once initial businesses are established with the margins to start planning for social needs, we should start with *essential goods* – food, clothing, shelter – to meet basic needs first, and then scale up to more complex industries like pharmaceuticals, heavy machinery, or telecom as we gain experience and resources. Deng Xiaoping's emphasis on developing the productive forces is a helpful reminder: a socialist project has to be efficient and deliver the goods, literally. If our alternative economy produced shoddy products or lagged far behind the capitalist sector in quality or innovation, it would be hard to inspire people to join. So we will strive to be cutting-edge and efficient in the sectors we enter.

Tactically, it might make sense to concentrate efforts in rural areas with nearly no productive base for revenue or employment as a pilot project. If we target an underdeveloped township or even county with a collapsed economic base, for example, we could encourage a clustering of industries there, effectively trying to turn it into a "dual power municipality." By focusing on one area, the movement could demonstrate what a local economy under socialist principles might look like: perhaps a place where a majority of businesses are party/union, local governance assemblies coordinate with those businesses, and much of daily life is organized through the dual power institutions. Success in one municipality would be a powerful proof of concept to replicate elsewhere.

Resource Acquisition and Funding

A pragmatic question arises – how do we pay for all this? Launching factories, stores, farms, and infrastructure projects takes capital, materials, and know-how. Here we channel our inner Deng (and even a bit of Lenin's New Economic Policy pragmatism): we will use creative and diverse funding sources while zealously maintaining our independence. Our own members and supporters are the first source – through membership dues and sweat equity. If a revolutionary organization has committed members each contributing a small monthly amount or volunteering hours of labor, that itself is a significant base. The key objective is to build several internal businesses with high profit margins that we can then use to form the investment capital we need to expand. We remain in control by our internal rules - we prioritize paying workers and reinvesting in expansion. Eventually, as our regional footprints grow, we may

consider launching a marketing campaign to strengthen our hold in areas through encouraging supporters to "buycott" – i.e. consciously patronize the businesses in our network and boycotting exploitative corporations. If thousands of people shift a portion of their spending from Walmart or Amazon to our party grocery enterprise or online marketplace, that's a flow of money *out of* the capitalist circuit and *into* ours. As our enterprises find their footing and expand their profitability, those profits are cycled back into *new* projects, creating a virtuous cycle of growth. This is essentially cross-subsidization in action: a successful bakery in our network might funnel funds to start a community free kitchen next door; a network textile mill could direct surplus to fund a neighborhood daycare. Each success funds the next initiative, gradually reducing the need for external financing. Over time, the internal economy could become self-sustaining financially – the profits of mature enterprises fund the start-up costs of new ones, like an ecosystem that regenerates itself.

All of these economic efforts are done within the capitalist framework initially – we file legal papers, we pay taxes, we "play by the rules" enough to avoid immediate state suppression – but our ethos and endgame are completely different from a normal business. We are growing the bones and muscles of a future socialist economy under the cover of legality. The intention is that, when the dual power has to openly confront the capitalist state down the road, it will already have its factories, farms, and supply lines in place to sustain the fight and supply the new society. This is building the revolution's material base now, instead of waiting until "after." If done right, our communities will start experiencing socialism not as a distant promise, but as something they work in, buy from, and rely on in daily life. That makes the leap of faith for revolution much smaller – after all, they'll be defending institutions they already know and depend on.

Community Apparatus and Service Provision: "Serving the People" Where the State Recedes

Alongside building economic power, a dual power movement must construct a community apparatus – networks of social programs, public services, and grassroots governance that directly care for people and empower them. If Section 3 was about economics (the base), this section is about the superstructure of daily life: education, health, safety, decision-making. The idea is to meet immediate needs and solve social problems *better than the*

official authorities do. By stepping into roles that the U.S. government or the market is failing at, the movement not only improves lives but also earns moral and political legitimacy. People begin to see the dual power institutions as their true champions. This approach echoes Lenin's perspective that Soviets (workers' councils) should actually administer society and not just agitate, and Mao's dictum of "serve the people" in practice.[18]

Enterprises founded by the party operate with dual character: externally, they function like legal businesses to compete and generate revenue. Internally, they are governed by socialist values—democratically run, unionized, and reinvesting surplus into movement infrastructure. For example, a party-owned cooperative bakery may use its profits to subsidize a free meal program for low-income residents or fund startup costs for a community clinic. These businesses are not ends in themselves — they are tools for community empowerment and movement growth.

"Survival Programs" and Mutual Aid

One of the first things a dual power party can do is roll out a series of free or highly accessible services in communities – essentially a modern, broadened version of what the Black Panther Party called Survival Programs in the 1960s.[19] The Black Panthers provide an inspirational precedent, and they did all this with volunteer labor and donations, out-organizing the government on a shoestring budget. The impact was huge. By 1970-71, the Panthers' Free Breakfast for Children program had spread to dozens of cities, feeding an estimated 20,000 kids every day who would otherwise go to school hungry.[20] In fact, during a 1969 U.S. Senate hearing, a government official was forced to admit that the Panthers were feeding more poor children in California than the State of California itself was.[21] This was an embarrassment for the authorities and a major boost to the Panthers' standing among the people. Our modern dual

18. Mao, "Serve the People"

19. PBS, "A Huey P. Newton Story – Survival Programs," *PBS* (n.d.): https://www.pbs.org/hueypnewton/actions/actions_survival.html

20. Diane Pien, "Black Panther Party's Free Breakfast Program (1969–1980)," *BlackPast* (February 11, 2010): https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/black-panther-partys-free-breakfast-program-1969-1980/

21. Rann Miller, "Before Governors' Push on School Breakfast, Black Panthers Were Feeding Kids," *Education Next* (April 21, 2021): https://www.educationnext.org/before-governors-push-on-school-breakfast-black-panthers-were-feeding-kids/

power movement will expand and update this model. The goal is not to create a one-way charity, but a cooperative effort that empowers the community.

We should emphasize how these services weaken the grip of the capitalist state: if a single mother knows she can get free childcare and groceries from the local socialist center, the fear that usually forces people to cling to any scrap the system throws them starts to dissipate. The psychological effect is as important as the material help. People start saying, *"That community clinic helped me when the government didn't,"* and that realization is politically potent. It builds class consciousness and loyalty to the new institutions. Over time, participants transition from beneficiaries to comrades. The Panthers called these "survival programs" because they were meant to help the community survive *until* a revolutionary change could occur, and also to build consciousness towards that change. Our programs would serve a similar dual role: immediate relief and politicization. And just as importantly, these programs show in microcosm how a socialist society would take care of its people. It's propaganda by deed. Every free meal or medical check-up is essentially an argument: this is what society *could* do for everyone, if it weren't driven by profit.

Parallel Institutions of Local Governance

Dual power isn't just about services; it's also about political power at the local level. We need to give people hands-on experience in *self-governance*. The movement can catalyze the formation of popular assemblies, neighborhood councils, tenant associations, and the like – organs through which ordinary folks can deliberate and make decisions about their community independent of (or parallel to) official government structures. For example, in an apartment complex where the party has organizers, tenants could form a Tenants' Council that meets regularly. Instead of each tenant individually begging the landlord for fixes, the council presents collective demands and even organizes rent strikes or takes steps to manage the property themselves if the landlord negates responsibilities. On a neighborhood scale, we might facilitate People's Assemblies open to all residents of an area. These assemblies could discuss issues like local crime, trash pickup, schooling, or traffic safety. More importantly, they would take action: organizing volunteer trash cleanups, pressuring local businesses to stop abusive practices, or mediating disputes among residents. In doing so, these assemblies start performing the functions of a city council *without the bureaucracy or corruption*. The party's role would

be to help convene these gatherings, provide a framework or rules in order to keep them democratic, and infuse them with political education (help the assembly understand, say, why the city isn't fixing potholes because money is going to police militarization instead). But the assemblies must feel owned by the participants, not by the party – they should be genuine exercises in direct democracy. Historical analogues include the Soviets (workers' councils) of the Russian Revolution and the Paris Commune's neighborhood clubs.[22] We would be fostering something similar in American cities and towns – community councils that gradually assume duties people would normally expect the city or county to do.[23] Over time, if these councils prove more effective or more responsive, people will start to look to them rather than the official city hall.

We might also create a system of delegates linking these local bodies. For instance, each block committee in a neighborhood sends a delegate to a neighborhood council that meets monthly to coordinate issues affecting the whole area. This mimics how a revolutionary government could form – bottom-up federation. It's crucial to practice this now, in embryonic form, so that when scales tip, there's a cadre of people experienced in self-rule. The key challenge here is to avoid co-optation or repression: local authorities might see these councils as threats (which they are, ultimately, to their power). But if we position them initially as community improvement or "civic associations," it's harder to attack them outright. And if they're actually solving problems, it puts the officialdom in a bind: crack down on people fixing their own community? We saw an example of this dynamic when some neighborhoods, tired of waiting for police, formed their own peace committees or patrols – when crime actually drops as a result, it renders the cops unnecessary. In sum, by organizing dual power governance, we are cultivating the embryo of a new state within the old. People get used to running their own affairs democratically and collectively, which is the best preparation for a future where they might have to entirely replace the existing government structures.

Meeting Needs the State Can't (or Won't)

22. David Priestland, "Soviet Democracy, 1917–1991," *European History Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (2002): https://library.fes.de/libalt/journals/swetsfulltext/13937520.pdf

23. Lena Rubin, "Parisian Collective Memory and the Paris Commune of 1871," *Continuums of Revolution* (University of Chicago, 2018): https://barnard.edu/sites/default/files/inline-files/LenaRubin_Continuums%20of%20Revolution_2018.pdf

A guiding tactic for selecting community programs is to target areas where the state's failure is most acute or painful. We touched on healthcare, education, housing in the previous section – those remain priorities on the service side too. Another dramatic example is disaster relief. Government responses to disasters (hurricanes, floods, wildfires) are often slow and inadequate, especially for poor and marginalized communities. Grassroots efforts frequently outperform federal agencies in the first crucial weeks. For example, the aforementioned Occupy Sandy utilized the slogan "*we got this*" as they coordinated disaster relief efforts.[24] A dual power movement could systematize this by creating a People's Emergency Relief Corps – trained volunteers across the country ready to mobilize when disaster strikes. It's hard to demonize the "reds" when they're the ones pulling families off rooftops during a flood. In fact, authorities might feel pressured to cooperate with or support these people's relief efforts, effectively acknowledging their legitimacy.

Another arena is public safety and justice. Many communities, especially Black and brown neighborhoods, justifiably do not trust the police and the court system – they experience them as occupying forces or arbitrary punishers, not protectors. Yet, those communities still deal with crime and conflicts. A dual power approach can introduce community-controlled alternatives: for instance, setting up neighborhood safety patrols composed of respected local residents (not random vigilantes, but people trained in de-escalation and accountable to the community). These patrols could deter violence, peacefully break up fights, and respond to low-level issues without the need to involve armed police who might escalate to brutality. We can also offer conflict resolution and mediation services – basically community-run "courts" for small disputes like neighbor disagreements, tenant-landlord issues (where we haven't yet succeeded in unionizing them), or petty theft among locals. By resolving these without the official justice system, we keep people out of jail and demonstrate a more restorative form of justice.

Building Dual Power in Daily Life: Culture and Education

Culture is another vital front. The movement should encourage and organize arts, sports, and cultural activities that reflect our values. This might seem

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24. Kasia Cieplak-Mayr von Baldegg, "Occupy Takes on Hurricane Sandy," *The Atlantic* (November 13, 2012): https://www.theatlantic.com/video/archive/2012/11/occupy-takes-on-hurricane-sandy/466734/

secondary, but culture is the fabric of community. We can sponsor local music groups, organize hip-hop concerts or folk music nights that double as fundraisers and consciousness-raisers. We could set up a community theater troupe that puts on plays about historical struggles or current issues. How about sports leagues? A socialist community soccer league where kids play for free (uniforms and gear provided by the movement) would be a hit in many places – and it subtly shows that you don't need corporate sponsorship or expensive pay-to-play clubs for youth to have nice things. And of course we have already been knee deep engaging in the media battle: our channels and influence are present in nearly all forms of social media. But as we grow we can and should create even more of our own journalistic networks and news platforms that cater not only to the broad national scale but localized and specific to community issues and the movement's work in them. If every month the local community center (run by our folks) has a packed calendar – a film screening night, a mutual aid workshop, a neighborhood potluck, a political study group – then that center is effectively the *heart* of the community. It's what the church was in many communities (and we can even collaborate with progressive religious groups on shared aims). Over time, the culture shifts: volunteering, cooperation, and speaking up become normalized, while cynicism and individualism are challenged.

All these initiatives – from free clinics to popular assemblies to people's schools – form the community infrastructure of dual power. They are the veins and arteries that will carry the lifeblood of a new society. Each of them alone alleviates suffering or empowers people; together, they start forming an alternative system of governance and care. We can look around the world and history for proof that this works. There are plenty of analogues:

- The Black Panther Party's programs in the 1960s–70s (mentioned above) remain a blueprint for how a revolutionary organization can win support. They also show the *impact*: the Panthers' breakfast program was so successful and popular that it pushed the federal government to expand its own school breakfast program in response.[25] That's dual power forcing a reform – essentially shaming the state into acting. But note, the government co-opting that program was also a way to undercut the Panthers' unique role.

25. Erin Blakemore, "How the Black Panthers' Breakfast Program Both Inspired and Threatened the Government," *History.com* (February 6, 2018): https://www.history.com/articles/free-school-breakfast-black-panther-party

- In Chiapas, Mexico, the Zapatista movement (EZLN) has, since their 1994 uprising, built autonomous communities where they run the schools, clinics, and local economy independent of the Mexican state.[26] For over twenty-five years, these indigenous communities have practiced self-governance – with their own assemblies and rotating councils – and delivered services like healthcare and education through their own means. They have a saying, *"mandar obedeciendo,"* or "to lead by obeying," meaning their councils must follow the will of the people at the grassroots.[27]

These were short-lived, but they displayed an instinct people have to self-organize and care for each other when institutions fail. And as more people participate, dual power truly becomes *theirs*, not just the project of a cadre. That is when it's unstoppable – when the ordinary folks feel: *these clinics, these schools, these councils are ours, and we'll defend them*. That social foundation is what will carry us through the storms to come.

Legal, Technological, and Cultural Considerations in the U.S. Context

On paper, the U.S. Constitution protects freedoms of speech, assembly, and association. Our movement can and should use these rights to establish visible, community-based projects: forming nonprofits, registering cooperatives, and even running candidates for local office. However, history — from the FBI's COINTELPRO operations against the Black Panthers to contemporary police crackdowns on protests — reminds us that as soon as our initiatives gain traction, legal pretexts for repression will emerge. This may include charges of sedition, use of RICO laws, or harassment under the guise of zoning, health, or tax enforcement.[28]

Our strategy must include both legal shields and contingency planning. We maintain a dual structure: a public-facing, legally compliant front that builds

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26. Allyson Todd, *"Autonomous Practice in Zapatista Communities"* (University of Chicago thesis): https://knowledge.uchicago.edu/record/13072/files/Thesis%20Final%20-%20Allyson%20Todd%20%281%29.pdf

27. Sydney Blume, *"Creative Resistance and Utopian Subjectivities: Zapatista Autonomy"* (2018): https://libres.uncg.edu/ir/asu/f/Blume_Sydney%20Spring%202018%20Thesis.pdf

28. Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement* (Boston: South End Press, 1988), 108–111.

mass support, and an internal structure for strategic coordination and protection. Anticipating legal harassment, we should have dedicated legal teams and rapid-response protocols. Making repression politically costly — by highlighting attacks on our community service efforts—can sometimes deter or at least slow state action.

Technological Challenges and Opportunities

Modern technology offers both organizing power and surveillance risks. Encrypted messaging, social media, and digital platforms allow coordination across cities, while data analysis and public records can inform strategic decisions — like identifying eviction hotspots or supply chain vulnerabilities. However, digital surveillance by state agencies and corporations — monitoring social media, using facial recognition, and tracking metadata—presents a constant threat.

Our approach is pragmatic: we secure sensitive communications with encrypted apps and teach digital hygiene, but avoid overloading texts with explanations of VPNs or Tor. Internal security teams focus on developing and maintaining secure channels, while open channels remain useful for mass communication and public outreach. Rather than listing speculative future tech, we focus on near-term needs: robust digital infrastructure for coordination, and clear protocols to protect against infiltration and data leaks.

In terms of tools, we can leverage public data — mapping food deserts, tracking evictions, exposing corporate lobbying — to guide our organizing. Likewise, our internal platforms for collaboration and resource-sharing can strengthen movement resilience without needing to imagine science-fiction-scale technologies.

Cultural Landscape and Messaging

The U.S. cultural terrain poses both challenges and opportunities. Generations of anti-communist propaganda have created a reflexive suspicion of socialist symbols and language, though this is weakening among younger generations. Recent polls show growing openness to socialist ideas, particularly when linked

to concrete benefits like healthcare, housing, and jobs.[29] Our messaging should emphasize practical results over abstract ideology. Rather than focus on long theoretical explanations, we demonstrate by doing: offering services, building cooperatives, and organizing community assemblies. Cultural engagement — art, music, sports, and local media — helps normalize collective action and embed the movement in daily life. A well-run community center that hosts education programs, cultural events, and mutual aid becomes a local landmark of solidarity and care.

Meanwhile, we must anticipate cultural backlash, not just from the state but from reactionary forces. Organized community self-defense and clear protocols for security — without promoting unnecessary confrontations — are essential. Cultural production, especially media and narrative control, counters demonization by showcasing tangible successes and humanizing our movement.

Risks, Tensions, and Dialectical Challenges

Building a dual power movement within a functioning capitalist society is a grand strategy full of internal contradictions and risks. We are, in effect, trying to create a new system in the shell of the old without getting crushed or co-opted in the process. It's a bit like changing the engine of a car while it's speeding down the highway – extremely tricky. In Marxist terms, it's a dialectical dance: we have to embrace seemingly opposite tactics and principles and make them work together. Let's examine some of the key tensions we'll face and how we might navigate them:

Repression vs. Legitimacy

Another co-optation risk is more personal: as our network of enterprises and projects succeeds, some participants might lose the revolutionary fire. A party business might start thinking, "Hey, we're doing well, maybe we should just focus on our expansion and derelict our political bylaws." Or a charismatic community leader might get elected to the city council and then feel pressure to

29. Walter Smolarek, "Dual Power, Base Building, and Serving the People in the U.S. Revolutionary Movement," *Liberation School* (Feb 4, 2020): https://www.liberationschool.org/dual-power-and-revolution/

play by the rules and distance from the movement. The ruling class might even attempt to buy out some of our enterprises. We need safeguards against this. One idea is to bake in rules: enterprises could have clauses that they can't be sold to without union approval, or assets are held in a community trust that isn't theirs to sell. Leaders who go into politics will be held accountable to the party and strict democratic centralism discipline, and if they start deviating, we withdraw support. Essentially, make sure any foray into officialdom is strictly subordinate to the outside movement, not the other way around.

We also have to navigate the effect of *partial victories*. Suppose we achieve something significant, like a city creates a public bank due to our private establishment of a people's investment firm, or a state passes Medicare for All, alleviating some healthcare pressure. These are good and will improve lives (and we should indeed fight for them too), but they might make some people think "problem solved, no need for revolutionary stuff." Our job is to politicize every reform – to explain *why* that reform happened (because of struggle) and why it's not enough under capitalism (it can be rolled back, or limited in scope). Lenin noted that reforms are by-products of the struggle, not the goal, and if the struggle stops, the reforms can wither.[30] So we adopt an approach: celebrate and use reforms to further empower people, but always point out the deeper issues remaining. For instance, if the government opens some free clinics inspired by our model, we can volunteer there and support them, but also make clear that comprehensive healthcare for all is still missing, and that true health justice would require eliminating for-profit insurance, etc. In other words, use reforms as platforms, not resting places.

Internal Contradictions —"Becoming the Thing You Fight"

Perhaps the trickiest challenges are internal. By operating within the system and building large organizations and enterprises, we risk internal degeneration – the revolutionaries could start to unconsciously adopt the practices or mindset of the system they oppose. History gives chilling warnings: many socialist or communist parties, once they gained some power or stability, developed bureaucratic hierarchies and even "elitist" attitudes that betrayed their founding spirit. There's the phenomenon of "NGO-ification," where once-radical groups

30. Vladimir I. Lenin, "Fourth Anniversary of the October Revolution," in *Collected Works*, Vol. 33 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1973), 54–60

become just another NGO managing poverty[31]. Or "business unionism," where militant unions settle into cozy deals with bosses[32]. For us, this is a danger that is best dealt with by strict discipline on an individual basis. Legal frameworks should be established to lash the businesses to the party to hold them accountable from the top while also empowering the unionized workforces employed by a rogue enterprise to frustrate and make abandonment of party and mission so destructively unprofitable as to deter any attempt at opportunism.

Mao Zedong was deeply concerned with this – he warned about "capitalist roaders" within the Communist Party, those who would steer the revolution back towards capitalism for personal or class interests.[33] That fear (plus real instances of bureaucratic privilege) led him to launch the Cultural Revolution to purge those tendencies.

> "A communist must never stay aloof from or above the masses like a bureaucrat. He ought to be like an ordinary worker in the presence of the masses, join them, and become one of them." ~Mao Zedong[34]

While we don't endorse chaos, we do heed the core insight: the seeds of counter-revolution can sprout *inside* a revolutionary project if complacency or new privilege sets in. Think of a successful party enterprise: it starts making good money, the workers & owners now have a decent life, some might get more interested in protecting their profitable niche than expanding the revolution to help others. They might start essentially behaving like capitalists. Or our community leaders might get used to being "in charge" and stop listening to the base, cultivating a mini-dictatorship on the pretext of efficiency.

Preventing this requires constant ideological work and checks-and-balances internally. We have to foster a culture of *criticism and self-criticism* – members

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31. Alex Press, "Mass Organizations and NGOs in a Socialist Movement," in *Mass Organizations and NGOs in a Socialist Movement* (Midwest Socialist, 2019), 1–5: https://midwestsocialist.com/2019/12/24/mass-organizations-and-ngos-in-a-socialist-movement/

32. Barry Eidlin, "State Coercion and the Rise of U.S. Business Unionism: The Counterfactual Case of Minneapolis Teamsters, 1934–1941," *Berkeley Journal of Employment & Labor Law* (2006): https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3625f8vs

33. Mao Tse-tung, "The Capitalist Roaders Are Still on the Capitalist Road," in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Vol. 3 (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1977), Section 10. https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/ncm-3/roaders/section-10.htm

34. Mao Tse-tung, *"Directives Regarding Cultural Revolution"* (September 13 – October 1, 1966), in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Vol. 9 (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1977), (20-8-1966) https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-9/mswv9_84.htm

and workers at all levels should feel empowered to call out practices that violate our principles. To this end a party enterprise that grows large enough to require a board will have as many party officials appointed to its board in order to maintain oversight and enforce discipline. Regular political education sessions within owner/board members, as well as other party and party affiliated organizations can remind everyone of their purpose and mission to fully realize the completion of the American Revolution. We might implement things like promotion driven rotation of leadership to avoid ossified power structures and push non-productive or status quo managers into retirement – no one should become a little king of a project forever. Materially, we ensure no one in our ecosystem is getting wildly more privileged than others through party oversight and unionized workforces.

We must also keep the "expansionist" mentality – as in, never get so comfortable that we think what exists is enough. The moment a dual power institution says "we're good, let's just maintain," it risks becoming a fixture rather than a revolutionary force. Of course, practical limits exist, but there should always be a faction pushing to reach more people, radicalize more folks, and deepen the transformation. If a party driven economic network prospers, great – use that prosperity to seed more and to take bolder steps (like experimenting with planning, or funding political actions).

Mao's remedy was continuous revolution, but practically we interpret that as continuous renewal of purpose and membership.[35] Bringing new people in (especially youth) injects fresh energy and challenges old dogmas. Having forums for rank-and-file to voice grievances or concerns keeps leadership accountable. Essentially, we fight the emergence of a "new class" within our movement – whether it be bureaucrats or cooperative technocrats – by staying rooted among the masses. The Mass Line concept (constant feedback loop with the people) can be our compass. If our leaders or managers stop spending time with the base or start talking down to them, it's a red flag.

"The people, and the people alone, are the motive force in making world history… [Party leadership must] gather the scattered ideas of the masses… concentrate them… return them to the masses in the form of policies … in an endless spiral." - Mao Zedong[36]

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35. John Bryan Starr, "Conceptual Foundations for Mao Tse-Tsung's Continuous Revolution Theory," *Asian Survey* 11(6) (1971): 610–628.

36. Collected Works of Mao Zedong, *"Some Points on the Mass Line"* (May 1943), Peking: Foreign Languages Press, included in *Writings on Organization & Mass Line* (2024): https:

In a way, we have to apply *the same critique to ourselves that we apply to the system*. Always ask: are we concentrating power too much? Are we creating inequality in our ranks? Are we losing sight of the end goal? It's delicate because too much internal strife can paralyze an org, but not addressing it leads to rot. The dialectical challenge is to be both pragmatic and idealistic: we want our projects to run efficiently (Deng's point about being professional), but we also must imbue them with revolutionary spirit so they don't become just another business.[37] It's a unity of opposites we must maintain.

Conflict Between Building and Opposing: Insider vs. Outsider Strategy

By participating in the economy and maybe local governance (through our own institutions or even electoral campaigns), we are partially *operating within* the system. There is no debate on this. Our stance should be that we remain fundamentally an *outside* force (we're building a *new* power), but we're not afraid to use inside tracks as tactical maneuvers. For example, if running a slate of socialists for city council might win us the majority and allow us to, say, redirect some of the city budget to reindustrialization and development or prevent the police from harassing our programs, that could be worth it. But we'd do so with clear terms: those candidates remain accountable to the movement's base (perhaps required to caucus with community assemblies regularly, etc.), and if forced to choose, we prioritize the party over holding office. They are a means, not an end.

Another scenario: maybe we ally with non-socialist groups on a campaign (like a tenants' coalition to pass stronger rent control). We wholeheartedly fight for that reform, but we maintain our independence and our right to criticize and push further. Once rent control is passed, we pivot to "great, now let's talk about social housing and cooperative ownership because rent control alone isn't enough." Some coalition partners might balk, but that's okay – we had a principled unity for a goal and now we move on.

//foreignlanguages.press/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/S25-Writings-on-Organization-and-Mass-Line-1st-Printing.pdf

37. Deng Xiaoping, "The Present Situation and the Tasks Before Us" (Speech, January 16, 1980), in *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping (1975–1982)* (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1984), 224–258: https://afe.easia.columbia.edu/ps/china/deng_xiaoping_present_situation.pdf

One can envision a future dilemma: suppose parts of the ruling class or political establishment actually offer to integrate us – e.g., a new New Deal type government comes in – the answer is a simple no. We do not invite social democracy into power sharing the dual power structures we and the workers built. We are building a *new* system, not merely pressuring the old to be nicer. So we must always remind members: reforms are not a destination, state approval is not our gold star. We'll use the cracks in the system to plant our seeds, but we're growing a different tree altogether.

Escalation to Direct Confrontation (Revolutionary Crisis)

Finally, the endgame scenario: at some point, if dual power grows and the capitalist system faces a crisis (economic collapse, climate catastrophe, political deadlock, or all of the above), there will be a showdown – explicit dual power cannot last forever; one power will win. Lenin's Russia had the October Revolution where the Bolsheviks, with popular support and the existing dual power organs (Soviets), forcibly took state power.[38] Other revolutions had general strikes or collapse of the old order that allowed the new to step in. In the U.S., one could imagine a future where certain cities or regions become dominated by our dual power institutions – say, our networked party industries are the main employers, people's assemblies run many neighborhoods, and perhaps even local police are replaced by community safety structures. The federal government would likely consider that a breaking point. They might attempt to reassert control by force (like sending National Guard or cutting off funds). At that juncture, the movement must be prepared to transition from dual power to singular power – essentially, to revolution. That could take many forms: massive non-compliance and secession of our institutions, huge street mobilizations and strikes, or even armed defense if it comes to that (though that is truly a last resort and would depend on having sympathizers in the military).

Throughout all these challenges, the concept of dialectical unity of opposites is our guide. We have to be *in* the system but not *of* it. We must be patient in building, yet maintain revolutionary impatience in our hearts. We create stability and services for people, yet we welcome the crises that propel change (we manage crises to our advantage, not let them knock us out). We work legally as much as we can, yet we know eventually we'll break legality to make legality (a new constitution or whatnot). Deng's phrase "cross the river by

38. Vladimir Lenin, "*The Dual Power*"

feeling the stones" resonates – we will proceed step by step, adjusting tactics as conditions change. There will be times to surge forward and times to hold back and consolidate. That's a dialectical, flexible approach as opposed to rigid dogma.

Ultimately, yes, the risks are enormous. We could face severe repression, internal collapse, or co-optation. But the potential reward is system-changing: if successful, this strategy means when the U.S. capitalist system faces its next big breakdown we will have in place the embryonic structures to replace it. We won't be scrambling to invent solutions; we'll *be* the solution waiting in the wings.

Conclusion

In summary, the concept of modern dual power in the United States is about playing a very shrewd and patient game: we build the scaffolding of a new socialist society right under the nose of the old one, gradually strengthening it through serving the people and creating alternatives, all the while synthesizing the lessons of Lenin, Mao, and Deng in our tactics. Lenin taught us to never lose sight of the final seizure of power and to organize disciplined political leadership towards that end.[39] Mao taught us that revolution is a people-centric process – it's about empowering and improving the lives of the masses *long before* the final victory, and that a slow buildup in "base areas" can be more effective than a premature insurrection.[40] Deng taught us not to be dogmatic in our methods – to use whatever works (even market economics or tech innovations) to grow our strength, as long as we keep those tools under political control aimed at socialism.[41] By weaving these together, we pursue a strategy that is both principled and flexible, aggressive in vision but pragmatic in implementation.

This strategy seeks to avoid the pitfalls of both reformism and adventurism. We are not content with small reforms within capitalism (our goal is to outgrow and

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39. Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, 38

40. Mao Tse-tung, *"Build Stable Base Areas in the Northeast"* (Directive, 1946), in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Vol. IV (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1967), 79–82: https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-4/mswv4_10.htm

41. Deng Xiaoping, "To Build Socialism We Must First Develop the Productive Forces" (May 5, 1980), in *Deng Xiaoping Archive* (Marxists Internet Archive): https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/deng-xiaoping/1980/101.htm

replace it), but we're also not delusional about overnight revolution in a heavily fortified capitalist stronghold. Instead, we are in it for the long haul – a revolutionary marathon composed of many sprints. Along the way, we will have to adapt to counter-moves by the system, endure setbacks, and refine our approach. But if we've done the work – built strong networked economic footholds, organized communities to govern themselves, won the narrative among significant portions of the population – then when crisis convulses the old order, our parallel institutions will be the ones people trust and turn to.

At that point, what began as "dual power" (two powers contending) can transition to a new singular power: a socialist political-economic system rising from the shell of the old. It might not come as a dramatic storming of the Winter Palace; it could come as a peaceful transfer of legitimacy when the old institutions fail to deliver and ours do. Or it could be more tumultuous – history will decide that part. But the key is we will have prepared – built Noah's ark for the flood, so to speak.

The United States is a highly developed society, and a sudden violent revolution here without preparation will only lead to chaos or tragedy. Dual power is a way to revolutionize from within methodically, reducing the chance of breakdown into chaos. It acknowledges that we operate in a nation not on the brink of collapse (yet), so we must erode and undercut the system from inside by outperforming it in meeting human needs and uniting people.

Of course, nothing is guaranteed. This process will be long, nonlinear, and full of contradiction – but as we've stressed, that's not a reason to abandon it; it's a reason to embrace it dialectically. If the movement can continue turning each challenge into an opportunity – using repression to expose the oppressor, using co-optation attempts to win gains but then pushing further, using internal debates to sharpen theory, and using crises of capitalism to scale up alternatives – then we keep advancing.

The prize at the end is worth it: a revolutionary socialist order born not from abstract theory alone, but from years of practical experience and struggle on the ground. It would mean the immense productive capacity and technology of America harnessed for the public good, run democratically by workers and communities. It would mean the end of rule by billionaires and finance, replaced by rule by assemblies of ordinary folks and associations of producers. It sounds utopian, but so did the end of monarchy or slavery once upon a time.

Our task is to make this vision credible and tangible, step by step, in the eyes of the people. Modern dual power is the path to get there. We will build the new world in the shell of the old, until the shell cracks and the new world stands fully revealed. Each party enterprise, each community council, each liberated space is a crack in that shell. And as the cracks spread and connect, the days of the old order are numbered. In that sense, our movement carries within it the future, laboring patiently in the present.

We are the ones we've been waiting for. Dual power is how we do it – *how we fight, build, and win*, all at the same time. The challenge is immense, but so is the historic opportunity. The austerity of the American system creates an ever growing void. We will fill that void with hope and organization.

It's a tall order, but as revolutionaries we're used to aiming high. So let's get to work, comrades. Dual power: it's how we seize the future, one community at a time.

2

Capitalism Is War: How to Stop Nuclear Armageddon

Ted Reese[1]

Colin Drumm, a relatively well known historian of money, recently claimed that Marxism cannot explain why "Judeo-Christian" conservatives like Mike Huckabee "want to fulfil prophecy and bring on Armageddon". "The 'critique of capitalism' is not a very useful lens for understanding the world," he says. "It's long past time to accept this."

To be sure, Marx's critique of capitalism cannot 'explain everything' on its own. It cannot, for instance, directly explain why "Judeo-Christian" Zionist conservatives are neuro-chemically habituated to beliefs they were brought up with from birth; but, then again, it does explain why such beliefs came into being in the first place – the emergence of private property and the need of its owners to justify terror they wage on people excluded from it. What it also does, more relevantly – which Drumm's "Madmen of History" theory does not – is explain why such fanatics are more likely to carry out their threat in the near future than they were 10, 20 or 30 years ago.

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1. Ted Reese is a British Marxist and author of *Socialism or Extinction*; *Abundant Material Wealth For All*, and *The End of Capitalism: The Thought of Henryk Grossman*.

War has been a permanent *feature* of the capitalist epoch because of, fairly obviously, competition between capitalists – rivals trying to rake in more profits at each other's expense. Less obviously, the rising intensity of competition and thus war is *driven* by the *nature* of capital accumulation, which tends to become *ever more challenging* as the system ages.[2]

As Marxists have always pointed out, as capital accumulates, the rate of profit (the return on investment) tends to fall, since the innovation, acceleration and expansion of commodity production naturally devalues the average commodity – as less labour time is required – producing less profit per commodity. The overall mass of accumulated profit tends to rise, but at a slowing rate. The general rate of profit therefore tends to decline historically ever-closer to zero, eventually making capitalism obsolete. (Many empirical studies now back Marx up – Estaban Maito, for example, estimates that the 'world' the rate of profit fell from an average 43% in the 1870s to 17% in the 2000s.)[3]

The dual character of the commodity makes capitalist crises inevitable. At certain points in the 'business cycle' arises an underproduction of profit/exchange value; which is also expressed as an 'over accumulation' or surplus of capital – capital that cannot be reinvested *profitably*. Capital itself is the fetter on capital accumulation. Marx's identification of capitalism's inherent barrier to production and his contention that it tends to *grow evermore formidable* is again empirically provable today. The amount of money capital sitting idle in US money market funds, for example, rises evermore steeply and peaks before every recession.[4]

Productive (commodity producing) capital therefore slows down or reduces its output; or is bankrupted, shut down and abandoned; or sold off on the cheap. The devaluation of commodities therefore subsequently devalues (productive) capital.

Before that subsequent devaluation, the growth of surplus capital and slowdown of production increases relative scarcity and therefore inflation, raising the price of borrowing, investment and mergers and acquisitions. The devaluation of productive capital, though, expressed for example through

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2. R. Ferguson, "War Is Not Part of Human Nature," *Scientific American*, September 1, 2018, https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/war-is-not-part-of-human-nature/.

3. Basu et al. estimate that the 'world' rate of profit fell to below 12% in the 2010s.

4. Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, "3-Month AA Financial Commercial Paper Rate (MMMFFAQ027S)," *FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis*, https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/MMMFFAQ027S.

cut-price sales and panic selling, then makes previously unaffordable capital affordable, and at least some of the surplus money capital sitting on the sidelines can find new investments. Falling prices enable an acceleration in productive expansion and innovation.

The capitalist is compelled to find new investments – accumulate more capital – in order to offset the depreciation of his capital and raise productivity and his mass of profit. Mergers and acquisitions, where two or more companies combine their capital into one – subsuming a competitor or enabling the defeat of a third one – provide a kind of 'short cut' to accumulation and create economies of scale, a greater amount of production at a relatively lower cost. Like innovation, mergers accelerate during a recession, partly because surviving companies riding out a crisis thanks to their bigger cash reserves can buy the capital from the bankrupted at bargain prices.

Amid falling prices, pioneers who cornered markets and secured the most customers by providing new/better/cheaper products see some rivals catch up; while start ups (often spin-offs from state R&D) with much lower overheads and greater flexibility threaten to invent a new market-leading product.

Domestic competition and the limited size of the domestic workforce compel capitalists to export surplus capital overseas – which often meets with resistance from local populations, national domestic capitalists, or other multi/trans-national capitalist corporations.

As the number of corporations and capitalist nations suffering from (rising) surplus capital grows, competition on the world market again intensifies.

Taking over the capital of rivals, preferably ones that are definitively weaker, becomes increasingly necessary.

Another way to expand the ownership of capital when surplus capital cannot find a profitable outlet is to force countries to privatize their state/public industry, assets and funds.

For these reasons, the outbreak of war becomes more and more likely and the frequency of wars tends to rise. At least the threat of military intervention is needed to coerce capitulation. Where resistance is met, actual military intervention may become necessary. That means capitalists rely on the military power of the nation-state in which they are based, since nation-states can raise

and/or redirect taxes; and borrow money on a scale individual capitalists or corporations cannot.

Drumm's desire to strip away socioeconomic context from the problem of saving humanity from madmen leaves us with the options of accepting annihilation or cutting off the head of the snake before allowing it to grow back bigger – the perpetual conundrum capitalist reformists always leave behind for future generations to deal with. That option is no longer available.

Rising expenses, falling empires

The outlay on militaries and warmongering is very and increasingly expensive.[5] The expansion and devaluation of commodities also expands and devalues money, reducing its relative purchasing power – the US dollar's has fallen by 97% since 1913 – and arms monopolists suffering from rising surplus capital tend to slow down production and innovation and therefore raise prices. (Private R&D in the US has become almost totally dependent on state facilities.) Innovation also creates new needs and capacities, compelling the state to purchase a greater range in types of equipment. Then there are pay inflation-meeting pay rises for personnel.

The US's military spending keeps growing absolutely and yet its practical capacity is tending to shrink. Its equipment is ageing,[6] since updating it to the required extent is simply unaffordable (something that is only partially addressed by redirecting spending from other governmental departments – hence recent moves by NATO nations to turn military spending up to 5% of GDP – but which obviously offers very definite limits).

Younger capitalist countries with lower surpluses of capital may therefore be more innovative – producing more advanced, decentralized, 'nimble' and automated equipment for far less money – even if they cannot match the absolute output of older capitalist militaries that still dominate by dint of owning more capital overall. Having said that, US imperialism's stockpiles of

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5. Of a below-inflation $6.1bn defense funding increase in 2025, $5.6bn went towards rising personnel costs.

6. In 1980, The average age of the US Air Force's fighter inventory rose from 10 years in 1980 to 24 in 2017. Likewise, the bomber force increased from under 20 years to 39 years; and the tanker fleet from 20 to 38 years. (CNAS.org)

munitions and critical materials are dwindling, reflecting capitalism's self-exhaustion.

This unfolding dynamic assures that US imperialism must decline and face being eclipsed in a similar fashion to previous fallen empires – China has already done so economically if not quite militarily yet – but also that capitalism must be eclipsed by world communism, since the decentralisation of the means of consumption and destruction empowers the working class to the eventual point at which its oppression is no longer possible.

War capitalism

War in and of itself slows down capital accumulation in the sense that the capitalist state seizes value from capital and the public (through taxes) that might have been spent on productive capital and gives it to unproductive, destructive armies and private weapons manufacturers who are always and increasingly dependent on government contracts, subsidies and facilities.[7] Weapons manufacturers want and lobby for wars, since used bombs etc keep the subsidies coming. Their accumulation comes at the expense of productive capital.

As rates of profit fall, private companies in general become increasingly dependent on state/public subsidies – to offset their losses – which means their 'business models' depend more and more on winning contracts that serve 'security and defense'. (Hence the rise of a particularly dystopian corporation like Palantir.) The taxpayer and the tax base – which capital increasingly depends on – are therefore bled dryer and dryer, an unsustainable dynamic which again assures the eventual fall of capitalist states and empires.

The expense of prosecuting war means war is only worthwhile if it secures sufficient amounts of tribute – money, land, labour, factories, raw materials, value, etc. Rising debt-to-GDP – higher in the US since 2020 than at the end of WWII – suggests losses from wars increasingly outweigh the gains, despite the fact that war destroys and cheapens surplus capital, opening up space for new accumulation (aided by the commercialization of military inventions for the consumer market). It was World War Two's destruction that ended the Great

7. UK think tank Common Wealth reported in July 2023 that BAE Systems pays just 14.35% of its own R&D costs and QinetiQ only 4.5%.

Depression, not – as claimed by social democrats, Keynesians and MMTers – the state's military spending.

Automation

In the age of automation, including digitalization and 'Artificial Intelligence', all these tendencies are accelerating – and the arms race accelerated by war in turn accelerates the automation revolution.

As mergers and bankruptcies accelerate, *fewer capitalists relative to total capital remain*, and competition therefore again tends to intensify, since the overall mass of profit is relatively smaller. In turn, the compulsion to expand production via mergers and innovation, rather than with existing technology, also intensifies.

The threat of World War and nuclear Armageddon will therefore tend to grow – a scenario that, for one thing, would put the achievements of capitalism to waste.

War's ability to regenerate capitalism is surely waning not only because of the contemporary technical-economic dynamic – whereby automated production tends towards making the profit incentive obsolete – but because a world war would probably destroy the habitability of the planet, either within a very short time frame or by accelerating global warming (itself a symptom of capitalist production, since non-renewable production (fossil fuel) generates continued demand for capital investment; whereas renewable energy is built to last and its infinite capacity produces free and therefore unprofitable energy.)[8]

The automation revolution accelerating capital's final devaluation – just as the rate of profit cannot fall below zero, nor can the value of money or commodities – which capitalism itself has inspired, demands a global communist economic system. That is, a *singular, united* economic system which ends competition and therefore *makes war unnecessary*.

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8. See Reese's book *Socialism or Extinction* and/or his video essay of the same title at https://youtube.com/@grossmanite

The tendency for capital to merge naturally progresses towards a 'final merger', *necessitating a publicly owned economy, since no exchange of ownership is required in a total monopoly*.[9]

Transition

The 'tricky bit', to say the least, is getting from where we are now, a world that is almost entirely capitalist, to global communism, a publicly owned economy worldwide, without a human-ending counter-revolution. Obviously, world communism is unlikely to be achieved within a short time frame, so the first successful revolutions will have to have strong militaries that are able to defend themselves from counter-revolutionary states and their proxy armies.

(A global revolution would, however, doubtlessly take place far more swiftly if it 'started' with the US, which would free the rest of the world from the most powerful ever military empire and the fear of invasion or nuclear annihilation. An invasion of a capitalist country by a Communist US would actually be a progressive war; although the weakening of US capitalism's comprador puppets around the world, by dint of losing US support, may give communist forces in those countries the capacity to secure revolutions without the assistance of a direct invasion.)

How do we – before it is too late – encourage and stimulate the defection and exodus of the working class and, perhaps decisively, sections of the capitalist class, over to a Communist vanguard party? In my view, such efforts should include the following:

- Firstly; agitation must explain the above: capitalism is war and increasingly war-hungry, meaning it is bound to take us ever closer to nuclear Armageddon.
- Secondly; agitation must explain and clearly illustrate, using compelling contemporary empirical data in a way that ‘goes viral’, capitalism's tendency towards a 'final merger', which must therefore be publicly owned; a transition which entails state monopoly capitalism’s (r)evolutionary supersession by ‘state monopoly socialism’; and then, once the transition is complete, a classless, stateless communism.

9. See Reese’s video “Capitalism is Birthing Communism” and his essay in Red America issue 5.

- Thirdly; we need highly-skilled, cool-headed negotiators. Movements based on 'taxing the rich' or 'eating the rich' will – like taking cigarettes away from smokers instead of weaning them onto nicotine patches – only aggravate the warmongering aggression of the capitalist class (and alienate well-paid skilled workers who we very much need to convert), potentially maximizing the sacrifice and suffering of workers, minorities and radicals during the revolutionary upheavals ahead. Instead, we must offer to *buy out the capitalist class* via long-term debt payments – something that the new ruling class has always done during the overthrow of an old ruling class (in the transitions from slavery to feudalism and feudalism to capitalism). The rich and the (former) capitalists can keep their houses and personal belongings. We will even cancel their mortgages and personal debt (along with everyone else's). We just need to take the land and the banks, factories, and mines, etc, under state/public ownership. (Obviously not every capitalist will accept; those who do won't do so in one fell swoop; and those who don't will have to be expropriated without compensation, but their refusal will justify doing that in the eyes of the wider public.) They should also be offered important roles in state-owned enterprises. (Incentivizing farmers to work with or for the new state will be particularly important.)

  Comrades who disagree with this approach and wish to achieve all expropriation without any compensation or other concessions, or without a transitional socialist state, underestimate the difficulty and enormity of the challenge that lies ahead. They should consider the fact that most workers everywhere are not yet communists, which usually remains the case even years into a 'revolutionary situation', which tends to be a long, drawn out process of radicalization and psychological transformation. Most workers in most countries are probably not yet even social democrats, due to many factors, such as fear of the capitalist state/internalized oppression and rising household dependency on equity, stocks and bonds. It should be clear by now that the working class has simply not had the capacity to overthrow capitalism before the system has more or less exhausted itself economically and historically by dint of becoming nearly fully automated.

- Fourth, we must convince the majority of people that communism is a higher mode of production that will work towards making everyone

materially and spiritually rich.[10] Unburdened from the profit necessity, surplus capital, commodification, and competition, production will be able to progress much more smoothly, without recessions and unemployment (and far less wastefully – we will be able to do away with inbuilt obsolescence and production for the sake of commodity expansion). As state enterprises raise the quality and, where desirable, quantity of production, prices will fall back down towards zero – for housing and food as well as technology – and everyone will be able to afford to buy their own advanced 3D printers and such, revitalizing independent experimentation and craftsmanship. Child care, health care and education will be free and available to all, and so on. We can build infinite, free, clean, renewable energy. Spiritually, alienation and division will tend to be displaced by community and unity.

What choice will the capitalists pick? Blow up everything they've built and end humanity before it has really begun to experience freedom – or get sustainably and spiritually enriched?

- Fifth, and perhaps this should be first on the list: Communist parties must start talking to each other about merging in order for them to be taken more seriously and become properly influential. *Everyone* needs to try to make concessions and truces and make their peace with the humbling nature of historical forces in order to minimize sectarianism and priorities the prevention of famines, pogroms, genocides, holocausts, nuclear Armageddon, and runaway global warming. Humanity's survival depends on it.

10. See Reese's book *Abundant Material Wealth For All* and his video "Communism will make everyone rich | On Abundance: Ezra Klein & Derek Thompson vs Ted Reese"

3

The Dialectics of Quantum Entanglement

Miguel Levy[1] & Hassan Ali[2]

Quantum entanglement poses a particular challenge to our conception of space and time, and to our conception of the relation between physical objects. It does so in a very interesting way because it revolutionizes an already revolutionary conception at the root of Einstein's theory of relativity.

Einstein's relativity theory postulates that nothing can travel faster than the speed of light in vacuum. As such, this postulate revolutionized our understanding of space and time. Spatial lengths, and the duration and simultaneity of events, were found to depend on one's frame of reference and not be absolute things. Matter and energy were found to be the same thing in different forms. These ideas perfected and deepened older Newtonian conceptions of space and time, matter and energy, previously considered to be

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1. Miguel Levy is a proud member of the American Communist Party and its Michigan chapter executive. He is a professor of Physics and Materials Science at the Michigan Technological University.

2. Hassan Ali, PhD is a scientist and researcher in the field of artificial intelligence and precision oncology. He is particularly interested in using AI to represent functional biology, overcoming limitations of today's limited perspectives on cancer genetics. In his spare time, he enjoys studying the history of philosophy of science.

absolute, unrelated, and mechanical. They showed that Newton's theories only approximate reality, but in a way that described objects traveling much more slowly than the speed of light. Our understanding of reality had to be updated.

This didn't mean that Newtonian mechanics did not give correct physical predictions. It did and it still does, except in cases that could not have even been conceived, nor tested, at the time of Newton, particularly, objects moving at speeds near the speed of light. Newton's theory deviates from physical reality in such instances.

The advent of quantum theory, in turn, challenged one of the fundamental conceptions of Einsteinian physics. This conception says that the factual situation of any entity is independent of what is done on another entity that is spatially separated from it. In other words, it challenged the idea that events involving two things that cannot communicate or reach each other, either directly or by intermediate material means, cannot affect each other's state of being. This is called Einstein's locality principle. It is also called local realism. It postulates that cause and effect must be locally related. Most importantly, this principle implies that cause and effect have to be close enough to relate to each other within the bounds of the speed of light.

Quantum theory predicts that it is possible to violate local realism through quantum entanglement. Two or more particles, such as electrons or photons (particles of light), can be assembled into physical states in a way that their individual physical properties lose their reality but the relation between them does not. Their relation to each other exists before their separate material existence. Crudely speaking, one is up and the other is down, or one spins clockwise and the other spins counter-clockwise, are examples of relations. For entangled particles, the relation between them exists and is real before they materialize as separate entities. Their individual separate physical states do not have physical reality. They lose their individuality. Particle 1 is not spinning in any particular fashion, and neither is particle 2. But the entangled object does have material reality and its spin angular momentum is zero. Both component particles spin in opposite senses if, and once, observed. This is explored further in the following section.

The reality of such entangled states was challenged by Einstein, Podolsky, and Rosen in 1935 on the basis that it violated local realism.[3] A measurement of the

3. Albert Einstein, Boris Podolsky, and Nathan Rosen, "Can Quantum-Mechanical Description of Reality Be Considered Complete?" *Physical Review* 47 (1935): 777–780.

physical properties of one of a pair of entangled particles (say, that one is found to be spinning clockwise) immediately determines the state of the spatially separated second entangled particle (it is immediately put in a counter-clockwise spin state). This is called the EPR paradox. Subsequent experimental tests since then have definitely confirmed that quantum entanglement is real and that these predictions of quantum theory are true.

The 2022 Nobel prize in Physics was awarded to Alain Aspect, John Clauser and Anton Zeilinger, precisely for experimentally establishing the reality of quantum entanglement.[4] The award was described to acknowledge "experiments with entangled photons, establishing the violation of Bell inequalities and pioneering quantum information science". Bell inequalities refer to mathematical inequalities that *must* be obeyed if local realism should hold.

The reality of quantum entanglement should not be understood as the overcoming of relativistic physics. Rather, it should be understood in a dialectical way, as the deepening of our understanding of material reality. It should not even be understood as a violation of the limitation of signaling faster than the speed of light.

In fact, there is a no-go theorem in quantum information theory, called the no-communication theorem or no-signaling principle, which states that through the measurement of entangled particles it is not possible to communicate information from one observer to another. The theorem states that, given some initial entangled state prepared in some way, there is no action that a person making a measurement of the state of one of the entangled particles can take that would be detectable by another person measuring the state of the other entangled component.

So, what does quantum entanglement say about physical reality? It says that a quantum entangled object constitutes a single entity with certain physical properties of its own. But these physical properties are not determined by the individual properties of its components, only by their mutual relation. In fact, the physical properties of the individual components have no reality until a measurement is performed. So, it is possible for particles, previously comprehended as separate entities, to lose their individuality.

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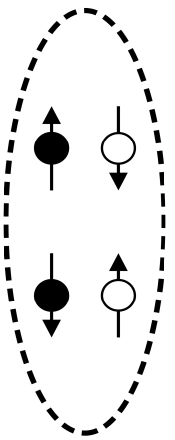
4. The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, "Experimental Proof That Nonlocal Quantum Entanglement Is Real," YouTube video, 40:19, posted January 9, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qarbr1B0iCw.

Entanglement is manifested in the absence of individual physical states existing for each of the two particles. Neither possesses any given spin orientation, only the pair taken together has a total of zero spin. There is, thus, a contradiction between the individual particles having the physical property of spin and their being part of an entangled pair. Only when the entangled character of the pair is destroyed, such as by performing a measurement on any one of the particles, does each one recover an individual physical state. However, the relation of having opposite spins persists after the contradiction is resolved. So, if one particle is measured to have spin pointing up, the other will have its spin pointing down. This is the dialectical materialist description of the phenomenon. The laws of dialectical materialism supersede Einstein's locality principle if one holds on to the idea that quantum particles must always be treated as individual entities possessing all physical properties ascribable to them in all cases. Not all quantum mechanical particles, such as electrons or photons, for example, must separately obey Einstein's locality principle. It is possible to produce entities, such as entangled pairs of electrons, or entangled pairs of photons, that violate Einstein's locality principle if each particle is considered separately. Each individual component particle of the entangled pair cannot be considered to have a well-defined physical state, such as spin up or down. It does not need to communicate its physical state to its companion pair upon measurement. Only the pair has the physical property of net spin equal to zero. Hence no signaling below the speed of light in vacuum is required.

I. A. What is Quantum Entanglement?

Quantum mechanics allows the creation of individual particles, such as photons or electrons, that can be simultaneously paired up with other particles in physical states incompatible with each other. For example, Fig. 1 shows a photon represented by a black circle, with spin angular momentum pointing up, and another photon, represented by a white circle, with spin angular momentum pointing down. In this image, the photons may represent light of the same or of different colors. The spin of a particle may be thought of as the particle rotating clockwise or counter-clockwise around its axis, although, technically speaking, photons cannot be thought of as little rotating balls. However, they can transfer their spin angular momentum to other particles, such as electrons.



Entangled Photon Pair

Fig. 1. A pair of photons where its individual components lack well-defined spin angular momenta

Entanglement means that in Fig. 1, the black photon simultaneously has spin up AND spin down *at the same time*. BUT, for the case when the black photon has spin up, the white photon has spin down, and vice versa. This is hard to imagine because in our human experience we never encounter physical entities that can have two contradictory properties at once. If we imagine the Earth rotating from East to West and from West to East at the same time, it is hard to make sense. But this type of thing is actually true for entangled quantum particles.

Let's say $|\uparrow\rangle_A$ represents particle A with spin angular momentum pointing up, and $|\downarrow\rangle_B$ represents particle B with spin angular momentum pointing down. Then, physical states can be created where particle A has both spin up AND spin down, and where particle B has spin down if A has spin up, and vice versa. These physical states are represented as

$$\frac{1}{\sqrt{2}}\left(|\uparrow\rangle_A |\downarrow\rangle_B - |\downarrow\rangle_A |\uparrow\rangle_B\right)$$

and are unprecedented in previous physical theories. *This is an actual mathematical expression in quantum theory. The expression contains contradictory states within one entangled material object. Measurements resolve the contradiction into one of the options.*

There is a technical reason for the minus sign having to do with mathematically writing things down in a way that the state is not changed if one looks at it from a rotated reference frame. These states are called entangled states and were considered by Einstein to lead to what he called “spooky action at a distance.”

Why “spooky action at a distance”? Because if one goes to the lab and measures the spin of A to be up, $|\uparrow\rangle_A$, the spin of B is immediately transformed into a state of spin down, $|\downarrow\rangle_B$. And the state of the system is observed as having been transformed into $|\uparrow\rangle_A|\downarrow\rangle_B$. *The contradiction is resolved and the two material particles now exist separately.* However, it turns out that this does NOT mean that one may be able to transmit information faster than the speed of light. So, there is actually no “spooky action at a distance” going on.

The point is NOT that, for the case of an isolated entangled pair, A was previously already in state $|\uparrow\rangle_A$ and you just didn’t know it. A was in both spin up and spin down states. But the fact that you looked and found it to be in one of the two, appears to have immediately transformed B into the opposite state. No matter how far B was from A. Maybe in a lab in another continent.

I. B. Experimental Generation of Entangled Particles

There are different ways to produce entangled particles. Early work made use of “cascade” optical transitions in calcium atoms.[5,6] The atoms were optically pumped (illuminated) to bring ground state electrons $(4s^2\,{}^1S_0)$ into an excited atomic state. These electrons decay back into the ground electronic state in stages by emitting two photons, one after the other. Conservation of angular momentum imposes the condition that their polarizations, although different, be correlated with each other, producing an entangled state. Their polarizations have to add up to that of the excited state $(4p^2\,{}^1S_0)$ they originate from.

An alternative, and more efficient way, of producing entangled photons is to split a single photon into two by a process called parametric

5. Stuart J. Freedman and John Clauser, “Experimental Test of Local Hidden-Variable Theories,” *Physical Review Letters* 28, no. 14 (1972): 938–941.

6. Alain Aspect, Philippe Grangier, and Gérard Roger, “Experimental Tests of Realistic Local Theories via Bell's Theorem,” Physical Review Letters 47, no. 7 (1981): 460–463.

down-conversion,[7, 8] as described in Fig. 2. In this process laser light is shone into a special type of crystal, called a nonlinear crystal, that converts single photons into entangled pairs.

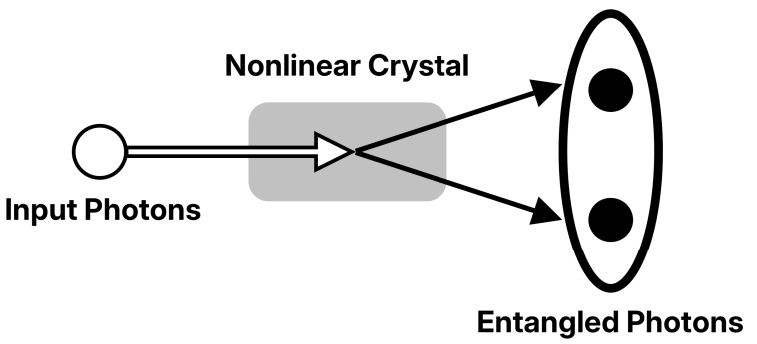


Fig. 2. Generation of entangled photon pairs through parametric down-conversion.

I. C. Experimental Verification of Entanglement

How does one make sure that entanglement is real? This can be checked by coincidence measurements. For example, two entangled photons with undetermined but orthogonal polarizations relative to each other, say, vertical and horizontal, are sent to different detectors. Then if one detector measures vertical polarization for one of the photons, the other detector will measure horizontal polarization for the other photon. By detecting both photons at the same time, one rules out the possibility that there has been any communication limited by the speed of light.

II. Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen (EPR) Paradox

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7. David C. Burnham and Donald L. Weinberg, "Observation of Simultaneity in Parametric Production of Optical Photon Pairs," *Physical Review Letters* 25 (1970): 84–87.

8. Paul G. Kwiat, Klaus Mattle, Harald Weinfurter, Anton Zeilinger, Alexander V. Sergienko, and Yanhua Shih, "New High-Intensity Source of Polarization-Entangled Photon Pairs," *Physical Review Letters* 75 (1995): 4337–4341.

The quantum mechanical prediction that entangled particles may exist, led Einstein, Podolsky and Rosen to conclude in 1935 that the description of reality given by quantum mechanics was incomplete[1] and that it violated clear cause and effect correlations. They argued that quantum mechanics makes it possible to determine the state of particle B based on measurements of the state of a spatially separated particle A, without there having been any interaction with particle B, and conclude that this cannot happen.

The argument raised in the EPR paper has at its crux the following assertion by Einstein,called Einstein's locality principle:[9]

> *"But on one supposition we should, in my opinion, absolutely hold fast: The real factual situation of the system S2 is independent of what is done with system S1, which is spatially separated from the former."*

III. Bell's Inequality

In 1964, physicist J.S. Bell proposed a way to check whether Einstein's locality principle holds for entangled quantum particles.[10] By assuming local causality, Bell came up with probabilistic predictions about the results of spatially separated experiments. These predictions took the form of inequalities in the results of measurements performed by such experiments. This was particularly important because it allowed one to test experimentally whether or not the predictions of quantum mechanics violated local causality.

Such experiments have been performed, and it has been found that Einstein's locality principle can be violated. It does not always hold. Modern versions of Bell's Theorem,[8] show that if measurements are performed independently on two separated particles of an entangled pair, then the assumption that the outcomes depend on Einstein locality principle, understood as the absence of signaling between them, implies mathematical constraints on the outcomes on these measurements. Bell's inequalities make statistical predictions for sets of particle pairs, under the assumption that the particles have well- defined but

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9. J. J. Sakurai and Jim Napolitano, *Modern Quantum Mechanics*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 241.

10. "Bell's Theorem," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/bell-theorem/.

unknown spins from the start.[7] These predictions show that quantum physics imposes correlations that violate that assumption.[8] Experimental tests prove unequivocally that entangled particle systems do violate Bell's inequalities.

IV. Pre-Marxian Materialism and Dialectical Materialism

Local Realism is the foundation of Einstein's conception of reality. Spatially separated phenomena or events are independent of each other, i.e., may not affect each other. In other words, local realism postulates that there is no cause/effect relation between them, unless they are "locally" connected. That means that they locally interact with each other through some means, such as through electromagnetic signals, e.g., sending out photons that connect both phenomena. Physically that means, for example, that photons are emitted by one or both of the spatially separated entities participating in the events, and received (absorbed by or scattered from) the other entity. In this setting the materiality of the objects precedes any materiality of relation.

There are two operative assumptions that underlie this conception, as follows:

1. Einstein's relativity postulate: No physical entity can move faster than the speed of light in a vacuum. This also implies that only massless particles (such as photons) can travel at the speed of light. This postulate implies that if two spatially separated physical entities participating in an event or phenomenon cannot be mutually linked through signals at or below the speed of light, then there is no cause-effect relation between them. They are completely independent from each other. They do not depend on one another.
2. Individual physical entities (objects, particles) always maintain their separate physical identities, their individualities.

Quantum entanglement overturns these two assumptions, in the following sense. Entangled "particles" no longer act as separate particles but as a single entity (a totality). They do not exist separately in three-dimensional physical state. If one conceives of them as separate physical objects, then human activity upon them (making a measurement) has the effect of violating Einstein's speed of light limit. The point is not that the speed-of-light signaling limitation is violated—it is not—but, the conception of the entangled particles as separate self-enclosed physical entities is wrong.

Dialectical materialism means that states of matter, such as entangled particles, exist. That the individual physical states of spatially distant entangled particles do not exist, but that this physical condition can be resolved into a physical reality. This is the dialectics of nature.

There have been attempts to argue that additional hidden variables must be added to quantum theory to explain such phenomena. But hidden-variable theories have been definitely and experimentally shown to be unnecessary, and in the case of quantum entanglement, local causality has been shown to be false. However, the alternative to local causality and hidden variables is not a rejection of materialism. The alternative is that material reality works differently from how it is conceived by conventional non- dialectical thinking.

Entanglement shows that individual material objects are not self-enclosed things. The materiality of the entangled entity involves the relation between its individual components BEFORE those components acquire separate individual existence. The two photons of an entangled pair are not separate entities. But their having opposite spins after measurement, and their realization as separate entities after measurement, exists materially before their separate individual existence. Thus, the *totality* of the relationship takes primary form, over the fact that the objects should need to possess all the individual physical properties we think they should have based on our everyday experience.

V. The Dialectical Materialism of Quantum Entanglement

As pointed out by Carlos Garrido,[11] "Insofar as being is understood as an unchanging, pure, universal substratum, it is rejected [by dialectical materialism] as an explanatory category. If being, however, is understood as a constant 'coming-to-be and ceasing-to- be,' that is, if it is understood as becoming, then it can be sustained as a foundational category in a dialectical materialist ontology."

So, how can one understand the physical mechanism responsible for the violation of Bell's inequalities, while accepting the impossibility of signaling faster than the speed of light in vacuum? After all, the experimental results of Aspect, Clauser, and Zeilinger, show that Einstein's locality principle is

11. Carlos Garrido, "A Comprehensive Look at the Dialectical Materialist Worldview," *Red America*, no. 7 (May 2025).

violated in the case of entangled particles if these were considered as holding on to their individual physical state when entangled.

What is the physical mechanism that returns to each separate particle of an entangled pair its character of complete individuality, a well-defined spin orientation, for example, upon measurement?

A lynchpin in this process is that physical phenomena do not take place in isolation. This is a central tenet of dialectical materialism. And it gets confirmed by every measurement involving quantum phenomena, and in particular of quantum entanglement.

Frederick Engels pointed out the following in his work Anti-Dühring[12]: "The analysis of Nature into its individual parts, the groupings of the different natural processes and natural objects in definite classes, the study of the internal anatomy of organic bodies in their manifold forms – these were the fundamental conditions of the gigantic strides in our knowledge of Nature which have been made during the last four hundred years. But this method of investigation has also left us as a legacy the habit of observing natural objects and natural processes in their isolation, detached from the vast interconnection of things; and, therefore, not in their motion, but in their repose; not as essentially changing, but as fixed constants; not in their life, but in their death."

Niels Bohr argued that quantum particles do not exhibit a definite physical property until they are observed. For example, electrons do not have a well-defined position until you measure where they are. Before that, they could be anywhere, within certain probabilities. Or, more accurately, the physical property of being somewhere is imposed upon the electron by the act of measurement. Before that, it did not have that property. This, of course, does not mean that the electron is not real. It only means that it does not possess the properties that we assign to macroscopic objects that we are familiar with. This is called in physics lore the Copenhagen Interpretation.

For the case of entangled photons, or electrons, in our discussion, each individual particle in the pair does not have a well-defined spin, *while it remains entangled*. But when a measurement on one of them is made, the entanglement is, or has been, broken. Then the other acquires the property of spin in the opposite sense. The problem is not that their properties become determined upon measurement. That is also the case for un-entangled particles.

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12. Friedrich Engels, *Dialectics of Nature* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976), 195.

The problem is what Einstein called "spooky action at a distance," a seeming violation of locality, or the possibility of signaling faster than the speed of light in vacuum.

One widely accepted explanation of this phenomenon among physicists is what's called quantum decoherence.[13,14] In the context of quantum entanglement, decoherence means the loss of entanglement, and its replacement by the two particles as separate entities containing well-defined spins. This transition is produced by the interaction of the entangled pair with the environment, expressed below as environmental states $|E_{\uparrow}\rangle$ and $|E_{\downarrow}\rangle$. Detector states $|d_{A\uparrow}\rangle$ and $|d_{A\downarrow}\rangle$ denote a detector signaling that particle A has spin up, or spin down, respectively. Interaction with the outside world destroys the quantum coherence and there is no violation of signaling at or below the speed of light requirement. The entangled state in-the-world is expressed in quantum physical notation as state $|\Psi\rangle$.

$$|\Psi\rangle = \alpha|\uparrow\rangle_A|\downarrow\rangle_B|d_{A\uparrow}\rangle|E_{\uparrow}\rangle + \beta|\downarrow\rangle_A|\uparrow\rangle_B|d_{A\downarrow}\rangle|E_{\downarrow}\rangle$$

Decoherence theory dictates that the physical state of particle A in a closed system (without interactions with the environment) cannot be determined since it does not possess that physical state property. Hence, there would be no violation of locality. However, if we allow interactions with the environment (an open system), decoherence dictates that particle A will acquire a well-defined physical property, either $|\uparrow\rangle_A$, or $|\downarrow\rangle_A$ with probability $|\propto|^2$ or $|\beta|^2$, respectively, after some time. In that case, particle B also acquires a well-defined state property, $|\downarrow\rangle_B$, or $|\uparrow\rangle_B$, respectively. This means that if particle A is measured to have spin-up, then particle B will have spin-down because the system was in state $|\uparrow\rangle_A|\downarrow\rangle_B$ upon measurement. So, again, there is no signaling faster than the speed of light in vacuum in this case.

The salient contradiction of the entangled particles is the absence of a well-defined spin for each member of the pair, although the pair itself does have one. The evolution of the entangled pair *in the world*, not as an isolated entity but as an entity that interacts with the outside world, restores to each their individuality. And this, according to decoherence theory, is a process, so that at

13. W. H. Zurek, "Decoherence, Einselection, and the Quantum Origins of the Classical," *Reviews of Modern Physics* 75 (2003): 715.

14. W. H. Zurek, "Decoherence and the Transition from Quantum to Classical—Revisited," *arXiv* preprint, June 2003, https://arxiv.org/abs/quant-ph/0306072.

the time of measurement both particles already have the property that is being measured.

As pointed out by Wojciech Zurek[12], a prominent exponent of quantum decoherence theory, “Observers monitor systems indirectly, by intercepting small fractions of their environments (e.g., a fraction of the photons that have been reflected or emitted by the object of interest).”

Interactions of the quantum state with the environment produces changes in the quantum state, and the most resilient states to decoherence, are the ones that are observed. This process is called environmental selection. So, an entangled-pair state evolves, through its interaction with the environment, into two statistically observable states that do not require signaling between them to be detected having opposite spins, because they already possess opposite spins. It is not the same original physical entity that is measured. It is a different, more resilient entity, resulting from the decoherence process, a process that Zurek calls Quantum Darwinism.

VI. Conclusion

The development of quantum theory, particularly as it concerns its philosophical implications, demonstrates the validity of the dialectical materialist outlook. The reality of the world is a becoming, a constant coming-to-be and ceasing-to-be. The “problematic” features of quantum mechanics that so preoccupied its founders and subsequent generations of scientists are, in fact, fully understandable from a dialectical materialist perspective. Entangled particles comprise in themselves a contradiction, that of possessing and not possessing certain physical properties. In the particular case that we examine above, that of the spin of entangled electrons or photons, this property is non- existent for each individual particle, although the spin of the pair and the material existence of each particle are real. The decoherence process is, in itself, a struggle of opposites. The elements of entanglement reality continue to exist but become progressively weaker through the process of decoherence. This process is, in itself, a transition from quantity into quality culminating in resilient states that can withstand their interaction with the environment, and where the individual particles of the formerly entangled pair fully possess individual spins. In the language of dialectical materialism, entanglement is a negation of a given particular feature, the spin of each

individual particle. And decoherence is the negation of the negation, restoring to each particle their individual spin. Quantity turns into quality through decoherence.

4

The American Land Question: Mass Indigenization Under the Dictatorship of the Cowboys

William "Panther" Pardalis[1]

Class Struggle in Motion Pictures

A famous photo taken in the Winter of 1979 captures a moment when Deng Xiaoping, the paramount leader of the People's Republic of China (PRC), put on a white cowboy hat while on a diplomatic visit to Texas.[2] A Texan cowgirl, who went on to be a lifelong rancher, presented the hat to Deng as a diplomatic

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1. William "Panther" Pardalis is an ACP cadre from Vermont. He was a lead designer for the party at launch and the field director for the party's first victorious election campaign. He is now the CEO of Red Horizon, the party's app development business.

2. Adam Taylor, "How a 10-Gallon Hat Helped Heal Relations Between China and America," *The Washington Post* (September 25, 2015): https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/09/25/how-a-10-gallon-hat-helped-heal-relations-between-china-and-america/

gift, while the crowd broke into raucous applause. We understand that the crowd was not merely cheering the physical event itself, but rather its deeper symbolic meaning. This moment was arguably the most iconic moment from the state visit that cemented the rapprochement between the PRC and the United States of America. That state visit set the world system on a fundamentally new course.[3] Americans hoped for an era of peaceful cooperation with this emerging superpower. Deng's very presence in America clearly represented the willingness of the Chinese state to build that future. Americans were excited at the peaceful transformation in store for them.

The significance of the cowboy hat as part of this symbolic drama begs an explanation. Why does a hat named for an uncommon profession in the United States evoke such strong emotions from Americans? How did a class position as historically and geographically specific as the cowboy take on a universal importance for American culture, an importance which continues to this day?

The meaning of this moment and its rapturous celebration by the crowd deserves careful investigation by American communists. We seek to synthesize the insights of the Chinese communist experience to advance our own national project. This ambition requires us to analyze the real movement of history. Our task here is to examine how the American people distill and express their insights gained from centuries of experience through our popular culture. We can identify how recurring themes in our culture reenact and reexamine the lost and latent opportunities in our real history of class struggle.

Communists learn from our history and chart a path to improve upon it. We invite our countrymen to give conscious expression to their inarticulated ambitions so that they can affect reality. Only by accomplishing this symbolic work can we translate the American people's real needs into a concrete plan of action that our people will recognize as belonging to them, not imposed upon them. Effective action and storytelling go hand in hand.

Deng Xiaoping explained the importance of storytelling work by communists later in the same year of his visit to America:

> *"Our writers and artists should try harder to portray and help foster the new socialist man and achieve greater successes in doing so. We must*

3. Tessa Wong, "'It Was Destiny': How Jimmy Carter Embraced China and Changed History," *BBC News* (December 30, 2024): https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cn446nmjp1vo

> *portray the new features of the pioneers in the modernization drive, their revolutionary ideals and scientific approach, their lofty sentiments and creative ability, and their broad and realistic vision. Through images of this new man, we must stimulate the enthusiasm of the masses for socialism and inspire their creative activities, which are of historic significance in the pursuit of the four modernizations."*[4]

This paper will present the argument that the class archetype of the cowboy in the Western genre, along with its synthesis with the archetype of the Indigenous American (the original American), represents the subject of the American labor struggle. Lessons follow for American Communists in practice and communication in the contemporary struggle for dual power.

A Century of Tragedy and Farce

The story of the cowboy hat is told in the genre of the American Western, predominantly through the medium of film. This iconic genre is defined by its thematic depiction of the era of the 1860s to 1880s on America's Western frontier.[5] The Gold Rush of the 1850s and the construction of the transcontinental railroad in the 1860s launched a new era in which the region of the Great Plains entered the American psyche as a public commons. This vast land was publicly owned, formally speaking. It could be freely used for grazing cattle, acquired through generous deals with the government to build railroads or claimed in farm-sized plots under the Homesteader Act of 1862.[6] The land promised immense natural resources to be shared or claimed. This opportunity was constrained by immense conflict as the tragedy of the commons constructed an atmosphere of brutal competition.

The Wild West era declined precipitously from the mid-1880s with the completed enclosure of the open prairies. The freely roaming American bison, commonly referred to as "buffalo," was intentionally hunted to near extinction

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4. Deng Xiaoping, "Speech Greeting the Fourth Congress of Chinese Writers and Artists," *Marxists Internet Archive* (October 30, 1979): https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/deng-xiaoping/1979/148.htm

5. Małgorzata Martynuska, "The Evolution of the Western Genre Resulting From Social Changes in the USA," *Studia Anglica Resoviensia (Literary and Cultural Studies)* 6, no. 5 (2009): 59–67.

6. Irving Mark, "The Homestead Ideal and Conservation of the Public Domain," *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 22, no. 2 (1963): 263–278.

by the 1870s to deprive Indigenous nations of their primary food source.[7] The last of these nations were forced to surrender themselves to confinement in reservations in the 1880s after enduring consistent deprivation, massacres and military defeats.[8] A harsh winter in 1885 eviscerated cattle herds, reducing the demand for open grazing land. Meanwhile, the newly invented barbed wire was protected by new laws which made cutting it a felony.[9] Physical and legal boundaries had been established around public and private properties.

The Wild West era took on a new life in the American popular imagination. Traveling theater exemplified by Buffalo Bill's Wild West show established the dramatic genre beginning in the 1870s.[10] The genre matured into the silent film era of the 1890s to the 1920s. It reached its Golden Age of popularity and market dominance from the 1940s to 1960s.[11] The Golden Age featured themes of heroic cowboys and sheriffs defeating violent outlaws to restore the peaceful flow of settler life and commerce on the frontier.

The genre's early timeline corresponds neatly to America's transition from competitive capitalism to imperialist finance capitalism. Finance capital accelerated its formal conquest of the American state when the Panic of 1893 depleted the federal government's gold reserves. To replenish them, the government signed a contract with J.P Morgan's Morgan-Belmont Syndicate, a cartel of bankers who made their money from railroads.[12] These robber barons secured private control over the nation's money supply with the 1913 Federal Reserve Act. They robbed all American citizens of their gold with the 1934 Gold Reserve Act. They socialized the international monetary system with the 1944 Bretton Woods Agreement. Finally, they were in a position to formally transition to a socialized credit economy when the 1971 Nixon Shock detached the dollar from its commodity basis. The imperialist transitional era gave way to mature cartel socialism.

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7. Heather Kirkpatrick, "Buffalo Extermination: 1865 to 1883," *The Michigan Journal of History* 11 (Fall 2014): 17-33.

8. Richard J. Perry, *Apache Reservation: Indigenous Peoples and the American State* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993).

9. Harold D. Jobes, *Barbs, Bullets, and Blood: The 1880s Texas Barbed Wire Wars*. University of North Texas Press, 2025.

10. Joy S. Kasson, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West: Celebrity, Memory, and Popular History*. Macmillan, 2001.

11. Corey K. Creekmur. "The American Western Film." *A Companion to the Literature and Culture of the American West* (2011): 395-408.

12. Lawrence W. Reed, *A Lesson from the Past: The Silver Panic of 1893* (NY: Foundation for Economic Education, 1993).

From this point on, the disparate markets of the North American continent were effectively enclosed by a single institution. The US dollar as its medium of circulation is distributed to banks according to a central plan by the private cartel of the federal reserve. With fiat currency, this cartel is free to structure the market according to the social goal of expanding its own political power independently from the strict capitalist logic of surplus value accumulation. This fiat system is maintained with global military and intelligence hegemony. International banks are coerced to shoulder the inflationary pressure of dollar creation and to accept uneven terms of trade with the United States.

The American blue collar worker – the American *proletariat* – experienced this qualitative transition of the 1960s and 1970s as an enclosure of both the public political sphere and of competitive market structures by circuits of fictitious capital. This transformation echoed the previous enclosure of the land commons of the frontier. In other words, the enclosure of the economic base was first completed, followed by the enclosure of the institutional superstructure.

Both eras of American enclosure featured the rise of major parties leading blue-collar class struggle united across industries. In both eras, those parties rose to national prominence, and were tragically betrayed by liquidationist leadership. Both eras concluded with a victory of the cartels and the closure of a window of revolutionary opportunity.

In the industrial capitalist era, the Knights of Labor rose as the premier party organization of the blue collar labor struggle. The organization grew to nearly a million members across North America by the 1880s.[13] Though not Marxist, cadres were organized in elected hierarchical ranks inspired by freemasonry. The Knights demanded disciplined secrecy and political education for its members. They organized laborers as a class to coordinate strikes across lines of industry, region, gender and race. However, their founder was replaced in 1879 by Terrence V. Powderly, who opposed the use of strikes. Under his conciliatory leadership, the Knights folded to pressure from the Catholic Church to eliminate their ranks and end the secrecy of their membership. The organization was easily suppressed and scattered after they were blamed for the Haymarket Affair of 1886.[14]

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13. Leon Fink, *Workingmen's Democracy: The Knights of Labor and American Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983).

14. Hubert Perrier, Catherine Collomp, Michel Cordillot, and Marianne Debouzy, "The 'Social Revolution' in America? European Reactions to the 'Great Upheaval' and to the Haymarket Affair," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 29 (1986): 38–52.

The Knights of Labor did not attempt to be the party to lead the American working class to claim state power. Yet in their declaration, they prophetically anticipated that their legacy would lay the ideological groundwork for such a party in the future:

> *"By far the highest motive that concerns us is the education of the masses to that point where they will fully see and know not only their own wrongs and degradation, but see a full and final solution of the labor problem, and when this is attained, each will see clearly for himself in his own way, the only path that leads to liberty and equality. When this advanced point is once attained, then will the party that is to carry the desired measures to success be evolved. It will be evolved slowly and imperceptibly almost. But that such will be the final outcome of organization and education, is the silver lining of the cloud that now lowers so threateningly above us."*[15]

Western films hint but never quite arrive at the latent possibility of a popular revolution that existed on the frontier, possibly the most promising in the country's history. In the final decades of the 1800s, the industrial blue collar class across the country were primarily organized by the Knights of Labor. The smallholder farmers of the South and Great Plains coalesced around the People's Party in the 1890s.[16] Many of the workers in both organizations had military training and experience from the Civil War. Many Indigenous nations had recently surrendered yet still produced guerilla warriors. The armies of the Sioux and Apache nations were delivering major defeats to the U.S. army. Yet there was no militant leadership to unify these forces and capitalize on the governmental crisis of the 1890s.

The imperialist era of America discovered a new leader of labor in the Communist Party USA (CPUSA). They too grew into the hundreds of thousands of members. They too were taken over by Earl Browder, the party's opportunistic General Secretary. Browder pledged to the American government that the CPUSA would continue to not to support strikes after World War II. Under his leadership, the party made self-destructive concessions, in this case

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15. Knights of Labor, "Preamble and Declaration of Principles of the Knights of Labor of America," *Chicago Historical Society* (1885): https://www.chicagohistoryresources.org/hadc/visuals/V0010.htm

16. Bruce Edward Caswell, *A Democratic Republic: The Political Theory of the Populists Interpreted Through the People's Party Platform of 1892* (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers, 1985).

to the Soviet Union rather than the Catholic Church, and Browder even attempted to dissolve the party.[17]

These organizations of blue collar leadership were decapitated and tamed under leaders that failed to independently stand their ground. The eras of the real Wild West and then the imaginary Wild West provide clear lessons for the drawing of lines between friend and foe as the American working class is manipulated and enclosed. These will be crucial to learn as the cartel socialism of contemporary America hurtles forward on increasingly unstable tracks.

Ghosts from the Frontier have Returned

The Wild West is returning. Not as a coherent popular imaginary order, but as a pattern of symbols in which the real phenomena returns in altered form, a form now capable of self-conscious analysis by scientific socialists. The difference of content and similarity of form in these historical developments allows a subject to grasp the common essence of the forces at play in historical development.

Search trends for "cowboy," "cowboys" and "cowboy hats" have indicated all time high levels of interest in the 2020s, since that data collection began in 2004.[4] The genre is returning in film media like Django Unchained and Westworld.[18] The genre is returning with even greater popularity in the medium of interactive game series like Red Dead Redemption, Horizon and Death Stranding, which position the audience not as observers but as active subjects navigating the American frontier.[19]

Marx noted how symbols of previous epochs of history reemerge in popular imagination to make sense of the continuity of class struggle across time:

"The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. And just as they seem to be occupied with revolutionizing themselves

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17. Noah Khrachvik, "A Sad State of Affairs: The Decline of the Communist Party USA," *Midwestern Marx* (May 10, 2024): https://www.midwesternmarx.com/articles/a-sad-state-of-affairs-the-decline-of-the-communist-party-usa-by-noah-khrachvik

18. Beata Waligorska-Olejniczak, "Quentin Tarantino's *Django Unchained* (2012) and the Afterlife of the Western," in *Rewriting Without Borders: Contemporary Intermedial Perspectives on Literature and the Visual Arts*, ed. Brigitte Le Juez, Nina Shiel, and Mark Wallace (Chicago: Common Ground Research Networks, 2018), 71–84.

19. Esther Wright, "Rockstar Games, *Red Dead Redemption*, and Narratives of 'Progress'," *European Journal of American Studies* 16, no. 3 (2021).

and things, creating something that did not exist before, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service."[20]

While the Western genre has reemerged as a symbol, its relationship to the reality of the class struggle has not yet been articulated in the popular imagination as a single struggle, but instead as a multitude of particular narratives. The class struggle is reemerging over the land as the fundamental means of production and over the relations of circulation and planning that determine land's utilization. The reality of class struggle outpaces its imaginary reflection and finds instead expression in a misrecognized symbolic order.

A common trope on the internet among younger generations is to express despair at America's lack of high-speed rail.[21] Internet users compare maps of the development of rail lines in America and others, with China the clear paragon of such continental infrastructure. Their beautiful stations are more grand than our airports and are designed with the white, flowing forms that put our crumbling concrete to shame. Our own trains are poorly constructed and mismanaged, causing regular disasters like the East Palestine, Ohio train derailment. Hazardous materials from thirty-eight cars burned for two days on the side of the tracks.[22]

The transcontinental railroad that opened the Wild West was built largely by Chinese laborers.[23] The Taiping Rebellion, a populist Christian revolution, and the Second Opium War, waged by countries including the United States, devastated the Chinese economy. Desperate men crossed the Pacific looking for work.

Today, America's plights reflect those of the mid-1800s China. Our pharmaceutical cartels have created an opiate epidemic across the country and

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20. Google, "Cowboy Hat, Cowboy, Cowboys," *Google Trends* (July 14, 2025): https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=all&geo=US&q=Cowboy%20hat,Cowboy,Cowboys&hl=en

21. David Alff, "Why America Still Doesn't Have Fast Trains," *Time Magazine* (December 11, 2023): https://time.com/6340931/america-high-speed-rail-history/

22. Scott Detrow, Erika Ryan, et al., " 'People Do Avoid Me': How a Toxic Train Derailment Split a Village in Two," *NPR* (February 5, 2024): https://www.npr.org/2024/02/05/1228772709/east-palestine-train-derailment-norfolk-southern-lawsuit-epa

23. Alex Shashkevich, "Stanford Project Gives Voice to Chinese Workers Who Helped Build the Transcontinental Railroad," *Stanford Report* (April 9, 2019): https://news.stanford.edu/stories/2019/04/giving-voice-to-chinese-railroad-workers

our youth are rapidly leaving the churches that no longer serve our needs.[24] If America is to renovate our rail system, that will likely be done with American labor and Chinese technological expertise, a poetic justice. But due to the challenges of eminent domain and privately owned land, not to mention a lack of political will from our banking cartel, such a project will remain nothing more than an internet meme for now.

The land question in America is reaching new heights of relevancy as a faction in the Republican Party was recently defeated in their attempt to make an unprecedented sale of 250 million acres of public land, of a national total of 640 million, across the Western states.[25] As of May 2025, Texas has now moved to ban the purchase of land by China, North Korea, Russia, and Iran.[26] Careful observers will note that these countries combined own less than 1% of foreign-owned American land, while American "allies" like Canada and the European Union own more than four fifths of it. But more than 95% of American land has domestic owners.[27] 30% of our land is owned by the Federal Government, which in our current era effectively means that it's a privately owned speculative asset. Meanwhile, the ownership of farmland by family farms is gradually declining. Medium sized farms are being eliminated, small farms get smaller and corporate farms expand beyond the horizon.[28] This policy can therefore only be understood as a cynical cooptation by hegemonic politicians of an authentic popular desire to constrain the private ownership of land in favor of American public interest.

At the same time, the American public is increasingly aware of Indigenous American claims to treaty rights over land that occupies the same watershed as their reservations, such as the protests led by the Standing Rock Sioux

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24. Aaron Earls, "As Drug Addiction Issues Rise, Churches Offering Less Frontline Help," The Roys Report (September 25, 2024): https://julieroys.com/drug-addiction-issues-rise-churches-offering-less-frontline-help/

25. Hugh Cameron, "GOP Split Emerges Over Plans to Sell Millions of Acres of Federal Land," *Newsweek* (June 24, 2025): https://www.newsweek.com/republican-split-federal-land-selloff-2089441

26. Alec Schemmel, "Texas the Latest State with a Law Banning Foreign Adversaries from Buying Real Estate," *Fox News* (June 25, 2025): https://www.foxnews.com/politics/texas-latest-state-law-banning-foreign-adversaries-from-buying-real-estate

27. Daniel Munch, "Foreign Footprints: Trends in U.S. Agricultural Land Ownership," *Farm Bureau* (January 14, 2025): https://www.fb.org/market-intel/foreign-footprints-trends-in-u-s-agricultural-land-ownership

28. Union of Concerned Scientists, "Bigger Farms, Bigger Problems," *Union of Concerned Scientists* (April 14, 2021): https://www.ucsusa.org/resources/bigger-farms-bigger-problems

Reservation against the Dakota Access Pipeline.[29] This movement is connected to the progressive environmental movement, which expresses deep concern towards the fact that energy cartels, while producing energy that is so critical to our lives, have such reckless disregard for the public interest. They pollute our limited reserves of drinking water and damage our ecosystems. Yet they are unaccountable to the public interest due to their mobilization of impressive resources within our system of legal political corruption, euphemistically called ”lobbying,” by which they capture our regulatory agencies.

These concerns have found expression in the rise of a popular phrase known as “Land Back,” which refers to a reevaluation of national question in America in favor of the ancestral rights of Indigenous American tribes and a transference of ownership of American land to those peoples.[30] It is crucial to note that this concept is not only gaining traction among leftists. States with the highest online search interest for this phrase include Montana, South Dakota, Oklahoma, New Mexico and North Dakota.[31] Except for Alaska, these are the states with the largest Indigenous American populations.[32]

And so, old fault lines have resurfaced in the midst of a great struggle against a unified financial cartel in nearly total control of our nation and in conflict with our public interest. The American people are thirsty for change. What sort of wanderer might be able to find water in this desert?

The Dictatorship of the Cowboys

American culture has developed a notable interest in cowboys, a profession which had distinct professional qualities. Cowboys were skilled transport workers in the agricultural sector. They had a particular relationship to the commons of land as one of their means of production. Cowboys transported

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29. Rebecca Hersher, “Key Moments In The Dakota Access Pipeline Fight,” *NPR* (February 22, 2017): https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/02/22/514988040/key-moments-in-the-dakota-access-pipeline-fight

30. Paul Cockshott, “Marxism and the Nationalisation of Land,” *Midwestern Marx* (October 3, 2021): https://www.midwesternmarx.com/articles/marxism-and-the-nationalisation-of-land-by-paul-cockshott

31. Google, “Land Back,” *Google Trends* (July 24, 2025): https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=all&geo=US&q=Land%20Back&hl=en

32. Cheyenne Buckingham, “States With the Largest Native American Populations,” *24/7 Wall St.* (January 11, 2020): https://247wallst.com/special-report/2018/11/20/states-with-the-largest-native-american-populations/

cattle from the point of production on the open prairie to a nodal point of commodity exchange and distribution at the train station. The emergence of this profession in America was a result of the particular geographic and historical properties of the Great Plains region. American cowboys date back to the partly Indigenous Mexican *vaqueros*.[33] The closest contemporary equivalent to this work, though not identical, is the truck driver.

In Volume II of Capital, Marx observed that transport workers, like cowboys and now truckers, play a unique role within capitalism. Their labor not only enables the circulation of commodities across the physical space of land. They also operate the physical foundation of market exchange and monetary circulation:

"The transport industry forms on the one hand an independent branch of production, and thus a particular sphere for the investment of productive capital. On the other hand, it is distinguished by its appearance as the continuation of a process of production within the process of circulation and for the process of circulation."[34]

In the era of the Wild West, banks and railroads were intimately connected. J.P. Morgan built his financial empire on railroad investments.[35] Transport infrastructure opened new markets and increased economies of scale, which was captured as rent by his financial cartel. Financial capital and the resulting means of economic planning and coordination emerged out of the transport industry in America.

Banks, by facilitating commodity circulation through the provision of money, became the means of capitalist economic planning. In our contemporary era of cartel socialism, these means of economic planning are an autonomous financial sector investing in itself to extract rents from an existing economic base with ever greater precision. Physical production is neglected in this circuit of fictitious accumulation. Financial cartels have deindustrialized the American economy.

While industrial blue collar workers have lost strategic leverage in this context, transport workers have only gained leverage. In our neoliberal paradigm of

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33. Lawrence Clayton, Jim Hoy, et al., *Vaqueros, Cowboys, and Buckaroos* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001).

34. Karl Marx, "The Costs of Circulation," In *Capital Volume II*, ed. Friedrich Engels (Moscow: Progress Publisher, 1956).

35. John Steele Gordon, "J.P. Morgan, Railroad Referee," *ABA Banking Journal* 109, no. 6 (November/December 2017): 50.

nomadic finance, a unionized industry can be undermined by the cartel merely shuffling its logistical accounting to move the industry to another region or replace it with imports. The only sector which cannot be relocated or off-shored is the transport sector, which remains etched on our land.

The strategic interest of transport workers in this context is to prevent the cartel from reducing the circulation of commodities by raising their rents and to increase the flow of market exchange. Their vanguard has the role of coordinating this increased economic activity and facilitating a continent-wide consensus towards this populist economic plan by the diverse stakeholders involved. This work makes the vanguard an essential element of the general struggle of labor. The class interest of the transport worker is necessarily prioritized by such work.

In Marxist theory, a democratic dictatorship of blue collar workers is necessary because that class uniquely discovers the universal interest of mankind in its concrete and particular class interests. A dictatorship of the blue collar workers, if it is to be particularized to its national context, is the dictatorship of blue collar workers with particular characteristics.

This particular blue collar class position takes a limited concrete form prior to the revolution because the national context is suited to its emergence in the production process. The self-conscious ruling class of a socialist state is not a fixed image of class position inherited from the previous mode of production, because the relations of production that define it will be subject to change. Nor is it reducible to a group of concrete people, because a class constantly reproduces itself while individuals come and go from it. The ruling class is a moving image, a hyperreal class position serving as symbolic hyperstition within the logic of governance. The blue collar's concrete historical content is suspended in indeterminacy. Its conditions of existence are in the process of being constructed. Its qualities are in the process of being generalized across the economy.

This new man does not spontaneously emerge as an idea, but is first born in concrete form as a particular blue collar worker. He is later identified within the national imagination as the archetype of heroism that they aspire towards. The class archetype rises from concrete form to the status of archetype precisely when the ruling class traumatically suppresses the concrete possibility for him to remake the world in his own image. When his specific class position is lost through an enclosure of the commons, that lost position becomes recognized as

a symbol of ongoing loss in the general struggle of the public interest against private cartels. The resulting class archetype is unmanifest and alienated from living reality.

The symbolic expression of this archetype in popular culture conveys that his justice is not yet of this world, which still suffers through an ongoing process of class conflict. The archetype is still latent in the unrealized potential for an expansion of the labor at the expense of private interests that limit production in order to charge higher prices. We struggle to give birth to the archetype again through the sublation of the present state of the world, through the overcoming of our cycles of error and weakness, and through our self-sacrifice for a higher cause. Such is our unmanifest destiny.

This blue collar archetype, whether a carpenter or farmer, a cowboy or trucker, becomes material through its organization of material collective action. It is also spiritual, not of this world or the present state of things, as it is not equivalent to the concrete existence of any particular living worker. Instead, its alienation from existing conditions of life grant it the power of articulating an unfulfilled desire, like a specter which haunts the living.

A cult of personality formed in America around the most famous actor of Western films, John Wayne.[36] We can identify the distinguishing characteristics of the cowboy archetype through a typical example of the genre, and one of his most famous films, called *Red River*.[37] This was released in 1948, immediately after the largest wave of strikes in American history, which included the film industry. The class consciousness of American labor was at a high point.

Red River opens with a shot of a caravan traveling through the American frontier. A horseback mercenary named Thomas, likely named after the apostle, leaves his caravan behind along with a friend and a single cow. On his way to the land, they encounter a boy named Matt, likely named after another apostle, who owns a bull. Matt agrees to work for Thomas in exchange for an ownership stake in their cooperative venture. Thomas claims a stretch of land bounded by the Red River as his property and spends the next decade building a massive ranch, saying:

“Ten years and I'll have the Red River D on more cattle than you've ever seen. I'll have that brand on enough beef to feed the whole country. Good beef for

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36. Michael Munn, *John Wayne: The Man Behind the Myth* (New York: Penguin, 2005).

37. Robert B. Pippin, *Hollywood Westerns and American Myth: The Importance of Howard Hawks and John Ford for Political Philosophy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

hungry people. Beef to make them strong, make them grow. It takes work, and it takes sweat. And it takes time, lots of time."[38]

At least in this archetypal portrayal of the trade, the blue collar cowboy had the opportunity to start his own business after refining his trade for several years. He enjoyed a degree of social mobility matching his mobility on horseback.

In the process of his labor, the cowboy gradually acquired the cattle required to transform himself from a blue collar worker into an owner-operator in the transport sector. Cows produce unaccounted offspring on the open prairie. Cowboys could claim unbranded calves, building a personal herd of mavericks over time. They could then claim public land and create their own cattle brand. This was feasible because the barrier to entry was low. A new business did not need to absorb the cost of rent when it purchased the rights to public land.

These conditions positioned the cowboy as a blue collar worker capable of accumulating capital to construct new circuits of market circulation. He invested his capital in underutilized land and established new transit routes, thereby increasing the economic efficiency of the agricultural sector.

But as the Western land was increasingly enclosed, their wages declined. In 1883, cowboys organized an industry-wide strike in response to an increasingly monopolized market.[39] When the strike gained only partial victory, several of the cowboys decided to start a cooperative together called *Get Even Cattle Co*. They stored their cattle across the state line of New Mexico, where Texas law was unenforceable, and defended themselves against a gang of mercenaries and police.

The institutions of law enforcement lagged behind the development of frontier settlements, so the cowboy had to be armed and willing to resolve conflicts according to his own judgement. In Western films, the protagonists have a strong sense of honor which allows them to make quick decisions when they are required to defend themselves or their communities.

In the film, Thomas is a strict leader, leading his employees to pull their pistols on him when they fail to submit to collective discipline and their own word.

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38. Howard Hawks, *Red River* (Monterey Productions, 1948), theatrical release.

39. Joe Holley, "Time to remember the day the cowboys quit in Old Tascosa," *Houston Chronicle* (August 30, 2019): https://archive.ph/20250305213519/https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/columnists/native-texan/article/Time-to-remember-the-day-the-cowboys-quit-in-Old-14401034.php

The first cowboy Thomas kills caused a stampede due to his careless gluttony, yet refuses to be humbled. Though the other cowboys are critical of Thomas for failing to deescalate interpersonal conflicts, they don't question his right to kill when a gun is drawn against him.

Red River's portrayal of cowboys highlights their strong sense of collective responsibility for a herd that includes their own mavericks and brands from several local ranchers. The cowboys were custodians of oftentimes cooperatively owned stock of commodities. Despite his personal feelings of loyalty, Matt commandeers the herd only when the workers come to a consensus that an alternate route bears less risk of being attacked. He tells Thomas:

> *"This herd don't belong to you. It belongs to every poor, hoping and praying cattleman in the state. I shouldn't have run away. I should have stayed and put a bullet in you."*[40]

The tendency of the cowboy towards cooperative enterprise was strengthened by his constant transcendental encounter with the commons. This is emphasized in the imagery of Western films. Typical shots feature a massive vista with a tiny figure on horseback, or a sea of 10,000 cattle crossing a river. This visual style recalls the popular Hudson River School of grand natural landscape paintings.[41] The cowboy's encounter with the vast scale of the public land induces a perspective of transcendental thinking which defies the bounds of thought imposed by social habit. This subjective position of the cowboy, imposed by their nomadic relationship with land and frontier communities, proves to be crucial for the cowboy's ability to navigate conflict between individuals, groups and nations.

Rugged Individuals with Sacred Honor

The Western genre articulates a blue collar subject uniquely capable of mediating the conflicts between vastly different American populations. Already, we saw how his class position unified his particular class interest with

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40. Hawks, *Red River*.

41. Judith H. O'Toole, *Different Views in Hudson River School Painting* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

a universal interest particular to the American context. But the question remains of the program and language that may communicate that common interest from the blue collar subject to rural populations positioned outside of the blue collar class. The answer discovered time and again in the American popular imagination lies in the cowboy's honor.

Initially, the Western genre explored two themes of villainy: the outlaw and the savage.[42] Both cases were initially expressed as private interests violently imposing themselves on an otherwise peaceful public sphere. These depictions matured into the revisionist era as the new mode of cartel socialism raised public skepticism towards a public sphere that was once taken for granted. Western films increasingly portrayed the material contradictions that gave rise to social conflict.

We can trace a prominent theme of blurred boundaries and reconciliation between cowboys and their civilization on one hand, and those excluded from that civilization on the other. Indigenous American civilization received an increasingly nuanced portrayal. This theme echoed across popular Western films of the 20th century, such as *The Searchers* (1956), *The Outlaw Josie Wales* (1976), *Dances with Wolves* (1990) and *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992).[43] In these portrayals, a gunslinging drifter is able to mediate disputes between different populations on the frontier. He often fights alongside Indigenous Americans against their common enemies, often the corrupt American government.

The protagonist does not mediate conflict through reference to a shared religion or cultural tradition, as the groundwork for it has not yet been laid by history. Nor does he mediate conflict through an institution. Institutions are shown to be easily corrupted and unable to adapt to the unpredictable conflicts of a constantly changing frontier. Instead, the solution presented in this genre lies in a principle of honor. The nomadic protagonist, through his experiences of loss and uprootedness from his community of origin, rediscovers the principles of self-sacrifice and collective interest through his personal relationships built on the precipice of life and death.

The cowboys are nomadic by trade, while settler caravans and Indigenous nations experience nomadic lives by necessity. The Western protagonist is able

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42. Martin Parker, "The Wild West, the Industrial East and the Outlaw," *Culture and Organization* 17, no. 4 (2011): 347–365.

43. Janet Walker, *Westerns: Films Through History* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

to view these communities from a perspective in motion. He is always encountering new locations, people and events. This moving picture allows the cowboy to observe the formative processes of war and peace. His casual encounters with death allow him to become accustomed to it, advance beyond his fear of it, and discover a higher purpose to live for. The cowboy often recites "ash to ash, dust to dust" over a fresh grave, recognizing the transience of individual life.

Honor allows the cowboy to navigate the political conflicts of a rapidly emerging economy. Institutions of social norms and legal enforcement lagged behind the reality of economic life. The rapid expansion of markets and the resulting state of anarchic conflict has been a defining characteristic of American society since its founding as a group of colonies rapidly expanding into the continent. This characteristic of America explains why honor was a central value for the founders of the country, who stated in our Declaration of Independence:

> *"And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor."*[44]

The principle of honor learned through collective struggle is the common thread the cowboy shares with the Indigenous Americans. The Apache in the Southwest and the Sioux peoples in the Northern Great Plains continued to wage war and deliver crushing defeats on the American army well into the 1880s.[45] Many other nations across the frontier had surrendered in the 1860s and 1870s but were still capable of conducting raids. Yet the conditions to achieve victory were not in place. The Knights of Labor were not coordinated enough in the early 1880s to disrupt the supply lines of war, despite the opportunity announcing its arrival with the Great Railroad Strike of 1877 and Great Southwest Railroad Strike of 1886.[46] However, for many Indigenous American nations, their war efforts were not waged for calculated gain but primarily for their honor.

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44. SparkNotes, *The Declaration of Independence (1776)* (New York: Union Square & Co., 2014),

45. Orrin Grey, "The Brutal and Bloody History of the Apache Wars," *Explore the Archive* (September 28, 2023): https://explorethearchive.com/apache-wars.

46. Jessica Piper, "The Great Railroad Strike of 1877: A Catalyst for the American Labor Movement," *The History Teacher* 47, no. 1 (2013): 93–110.

Sitting Bull, a Sioux chief during the Sioux Wars, united the Lakota and Dakota, Nez Perce and Northern Cheyenne during the Sioux Wars. As his army was facing starvation in 1876, he remarked, *"now we are poor but we are free. No white man controls our footsteps. If we must die we die defending our rights."*[47]

A common theme from speeches of Indigenous American leaders was that their sense of purpose was determined by their ancestral relationship with American land. In a famous speech from the mid-1800s, Chief Seattle of the Duwamish and Suquamish peoples in the Pacific Northwest expressed the possibility of a common destiny of the American people:

> *"Tribe follows tribe, and nation follows nation, like the waves of the sea. It is the order of nature [...] for even the White Man whose God walked and talked with him as friend with friend, cannot be exempt from the common destiny. We may be brothers after all."*[48]

In this sentiment we discover how individual honor emerges from the real movement which sublates the present state of things. Chief Seattle does not describe an idealist conception of the Indigenous subject, but a collective subject which is conditioned by the material conditions that created it.

In the cowboy, we observe the genesis of this subjectivity in an individual. The cowboy's class position generates a dialectical materialist individualism. The land provides the material foundation of his life, and the collective struggle of his class provides the subjective foundation of his values. The rugged conditions of his existence reveals to him the real unity of his individual subjective form with his shared objective content. This unique discovery allows the Western protagonist to build a bridge between different worlds.

The Mass Indigenization of Americans

The word "indigenous" is a general category applying to the populations across the world who resisted the historical process of colonization.[49] Colonization is

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47. Sitting Bull, *I Have Spoken*, ed. Virginia Irving Armstrong (New York: The Swallow Press, Inc., 1971).

48. Edward S. Curtis, *Native American Wisdom* (Philadelphia: Running Press, 1993).

49. Erika Sarivaara, Kaarina Määttä, and Satu Uusiautti, "Who Is Indigenous? Definitions of Indigeneity," *Eurasian Multidisciplinary Forum (EMF) Proceedings* 1 (October 24–26, 2013): 369–378.

the appropriation of land for private ownership, to be integrated into a circuit of capital which is fundamentally alienated from the previous mode of production and way of life on that land. Indigeneity describes the real movement of peoples to continue their mode of production in which land is a socialized means of production for the public interest. Indigeneity can persist as an indefinite process of preservation, while colonization is a process of accumulation which reaches a limit and gives way to a new mode of production. Indigeneity can outlive the process of colonization as a continuous renewal of the public relationship with land.

This schema reveals how a population may become indigenous. It requires a revolutionary discontinuity with the mode of production in which land is privately owned. The resulting mode of production holds land as a publicly managed resource. Such a revolution may be expected to require the people to sacrifice their lives for the interests of their community, eschewing their private interests for the common good. For a community to be indigenous to their land is for them to collectively participate in the renewal of communal custodianship of that land.

The Indigenous American author and leader, Sioux Luther Standing Bear, recognized the material basis of indigeneity and the ability for that category to expand to other American peoples in the future:

> *"The white man [...] does not understand America. He is too far removed from its formative processes. The roots of the tree of his life have not yet grasped the rock and the soil. [...] But in the Indian the spirit of the land is still vested; it will be until other men are able to divine and meet its rhythm. Men must be born and reborn to belong. Their bodies must be formed of the dust of their forefathers' bones."* [50]

While settlers could acquire land only through their political integration into the capitalist state, whether British or later American, Indigenous sovereignty would necessarily entail some level of socialized property in land. Settlers in early America understood that the exclusion of Indigenous Americans from the new regime of private property was the root cause of their conflict:

> *"That the civilization of the Indians would be an operation of complicated difficulty; that it would require the highest knowledge of the human*

50. Sioux Luther Standing Bear, *I Have Spoken*.

> *character, and a steady perseverance in a wise system for a series of years, cannot be doubted [...] Were it possible to introduce among the Indian tribes a love for exclusive property, it would be a happy commencement of the business."*[51]

Indigenous American nations practiced various forms of primitive communism, in which land is used as a commons. To this day, many Indigenous nations have maintained a limited form of populist socialism. A common model is to use profits from nation-owned casinos to provide dividends, housing and infrastructure development to the public.

To take just one example of many, the Mashantucket Pequot Tribe of Connecticut used proceeds from their socially-owned Foxwoods casino to build public housing and provide yearly dividends to tribal members up to $100,000.[52] However, their struggle remains enmeshed with the general struggle of American labor because a fully socialized economy cannot function on the scale of a reservation. The pandemic of 2020 deprived Foxwoods of revenue, leading to a massive debt burden and the end of dividend payments. Tribal sovereignty in America today is deeply connected to the general sovereignty of the American people from debt to our banking cartel.

Black Americans are already partially indigenous. The class position of the slave held no economic stake in the capitalist mode of production. The 100,000 slaves who rebelled and fought in the American Civil War against the Southern plantation owners were the vanguard of a Black political movement to fundamentally answer the American land question in favor of the public interest. To the extent that the Black community today continues to demand the land redistribution promised and denied to them in the form of "40 acres and a mule," they continue to be a semi-indigenous population.[53] They can only become fully indigenous once the demand becomes "all acres" and is fought for alongside Americans of all ethnicities. The mode of production they would need to overthrow is one in which the cartel increasingly owns the land of the entire continent and all its people.

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51. Henry Knox, "Knox to Washington," July 1789. In *The Papers of George Washington: Presidential Series*, ed. Dorothy Twohig et al. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1987).

52. Christina Rose, "Small Dreams: Affordable Housing for Mashantucket Pequots," *ICT* (June 17, 2015): https://ictnews.org/archive/small-dreams-affordable-housing-for-mashantucket-pequots/

53. Nadra Kareem Nittle, "The Short-Lived Promise of '40 Acres and a Mule'," *History* (November 09, 2022): https://www.history.com/articles/40-acres-mule-promise

The general struggle of the American people for indigeneity has gone broadly unfulfilled and misrecognized. The revolution of 1776 was a small step toward indigeneity insofar as the revolutionaries fought for a domestic government both capable of administering the public ownership of land and accountable to the public. Yet the reality is that the revolution did not enfranchise the vast majority of the population and land was legally enshrined as private property.

The desire for indigeneity has been a recurring theme expressed by non-indigenous Americans. The patriots who conducted the Boston Tea Party, a famous escalation of the revolution against Britain, dressed themselves as Indigenous Americans in order to symbolically assert their uniquely American identity.[54] More recently, iconic photos from the occupation of the U.S. capitol building on January 6, 2021 in protest of the perceived private capture of an election depict a White man wearing war paint and a buffalo headdress.[55]

American Founding Father Benjamin Franklin recognized the value of the Indigenous American relationship with land, stating, "*no European who has tasted Savage life can afterwards bear to live in our societies*."[56] Franklin also spoke positively about the primitive communistic mode of production utilized by Indigenous Americans, contrasting it negatively against the class societies of Europe: *"among the Indians, land was not privately owned but held in common by the tribe, a practice which prevented the sort of disputes over property that plagued European societies."* [57] Thomas Jefferson also expressed similar sentiments, writing: *"I am convinced that those societies (as the Indians) which live without government enjoy in their general mass an infinitely greater degree of happiness than those who live under European governments."*[58]

Even American Communists have explored the language of indigeneity. In its usage by the Black Panther Party, the panther is a synonym for an American Communist partisan. Panther is an umbrella term which includes the leopard in Africa, the jaguar in South and Central America, and North America's native

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54. Benjamin L. Carp, *Defiance of the Patriots: The Boston Tea Party and the Making of America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

55. Katelyn Polantz, "January 6 Rioter 'QAnon Shaman' to Get His Headdress and Spear Back, Judge Rules," *CNN* (August 5, 2024): https://www.cnn.com/2024/08/05/politics/january-6-jacob-chansley-helmet-spear

56. Benjamin Franklin, "Benjamin Franklin to Peter Collinson," 1753. In *The Writings of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. Albert Henry Smyth. (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1907).

57. Benjamin Franklin, "Remarks Concerning the Savages of North America," *Franklin Papers* (1874): https://franklinpapers.org/framedVolumes.jsp

58. Thomas Jefferson, "Thomas Jefferson to Edward Carrington," *National Archives* (2002): https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-11-02-0047

big cat, the mountain lion. The name of the party symbolized a claim to belong to the land of both their ancestral roots and their current home. It recalls the older Indigenous American practice of naming people after the qualities they share with native species.

In contemporary American discourse, the slogan of "Land Back" has grown in popularity. In its constructive aspect, the idea calls for land rights promised in treaties with Indigenous nations to be restored and respected by the American government. This movement represents an assertion of the public interest against private cartels in the fossil fuel, agriculture and manufacturing industries. It is thus an element of the real communist movement.

A perverse form of "Land Back" has gained popularity among American leftists. Though searches for the term are popular in states with significant Indigenous populations as mentioned above, the rest of the states in the top 10 of search interest for "Land Back" are Alabama, South Carolina, Mississippi, West Virginia and Maine.[59] These states have relatively small Native populations. This expresses a misrecognized aspiration for all Americans to have an indigenous relationship to their land.

The perverse form of Land Back advocates for the entire continent to be governed by a racial caste system in which Indigenous Americans have political rights while "settlers," potentially including White, Black and Latino (an already part-Indigenous ethnicity) populations who are not tribal citizens, would not hold political rights.[60]

This foolish idea draws from the Noble Savage trope, which portrays Indigenous Americans not as normal humans facing the same class struggles and social ills as other Americans, but as a race uniquely endowed with a respect for public land ownership.[61] The "Land Back" leftists fail to recognize that the American people would never lay down their lives to fight for this arrangement, so it will never occur without the support of our ruling cartel. They also fail to recognize that if this arrangement were implemented, Indigenous Americans would own land in America as a private interest group

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59. Google, "Land Back."

60. PACD, "5 Settlers Discuss Landback (feat. Caleb Maupin + Fox & Alex from Space Commune)," *YouTube* (October 6, 2021): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rB7DwdCxgtM&t=1s

61. Ter Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

separated off from the land's inhabitants, and they would as a result cease to be indigenous.

Indigenous reservations are at risk of losing sovereignty over their land through concessions to the finance sector to pay off debts. Rather than surrender to this gambit of colonial privatization, or become landlords over non-tribal citizens themselves, they could re-establish a firm foundation of Indigenous sovereignty by rooting their cause within the general struggle of American labor.

Indigenous Americans living on reservations, just like the rest of the American people, need government accountability, infrastructure and jobs. Our ecosystems and watersheds need to be under joint sovereignty, owned by all people of the American continent rather than by private cartels. All Americans will become indigenous under Cowboy Communism's public custodianship of land. Yes, Land Back to the public. The American spirit will be Red.[62]

The Eternal Frontier

The Wild West era yielded unfulfilled prophecies about the future of American civilization. On the one hand, these took the form of a network of symbols which struck Americans as significant without their being conscious of the reason. On the other hand, an apocalyptic genocide of Indigenous American civilization spurred their sages to deliver haunting prophecies about the unreality of death and the unification of the future with the past. These prophecies are now ripe to be consciously understood and brought to fruition through the emergence of a transport-worker-led Communist movement and its construction of socialism with American characteristics.

An American dual power strategy can now be articulated which appropriates the mature means of economic coordination and planning through decentralized network technology and cryptography. This can be used to plan and increase domestic commodity production and circulation by connecting producers to precise pockets of specialized demand across the continent. The financial resources of the American grassroots can be coordinated through network architecture as long as there exists a vanguard armed with highly effective

62. Haz Al-Din, “BREAKING: TRUMP GOES NUCLEAR, EXPOSES NATO TERRORISM!,” *Infrared Content Catalogue* (April 12, 2023), 36:45: https://infrared-transcripts.pages.dev/en/youtube/infrared/9xltse5wdag/

consensus-building processes and a subjective position capable of national leadership.

This precise coordination of circulation between producers and consumers reduces transport costs by aiming to increase logistical efficiency. Ironically, this facilitates the cultivation of local economies which utilize the particular affordances of their local land. A local region can increase its prosperity by supporting the comparative advantages of its firms and personnel across the value chain. As the means of circulation and planning becomes more precise, we can increasingly connect specialized goods with an appropriate market. Localities see diminishing returns from homogenous economies of scale relative to specialized production.

According to Deng Xiaoping, the efficient reorganization of trade and economic planning by a theoretically advanced vanguard constitutes a revolution:

> *"Streamlining is a revolution. So is 'selecting the virtuous and appointing the able.' We must do a good job of organizational trimming and — even more important — we must do a good job of promoting cadres. [...] China is very poor and wants to develop; it can't do that without a peaceful environment. Since we want a peaceful environment, we must cooperate with all of the world's forces for peace."*[63]

Deng points out that such a revolution requires peaceful cooperation with international economic partners. This requirement situates the struggle for institutional streamlining within the general struggle of class warfare. In Deng's practical application of this thesis to Chinese statecraft, American communists discover a theoretical basis for an American synthesis of the Marxist-Leninist dual power strategy through institutional and economic streamlining.

The communist drive towards ever more efficient use of our human and natural resources recalls the superiority of the Indigenous use of buffalo over the settler use of the animal. The settlers sought to harvest that natural resource in ever greater quantity, but they only harvested their tongues and pelts. They left skinned bodies to rot in nightmarish mounds on the prairie. The population was depleted within a decade after the intercontinental railroad was completed. This

63. Deng Xiaoping, "We Regard Reform As A Revolution," *Marxists Internet Archive* (October 10, 1984): https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/deng-xiaoping/1984/193.htm

inefficient utilization of the natural resource was a deliberate act of terrorism on behalf of U.S. government policy to starve the Indigenous Americans of the plains.[64] Indigenous Americans used all parts of the buffalo they hunted, surviving off the meat and using the other parts for various kinds of artisanal production.

Indigenous knowledge of the anatomy and effective use of the bison constituted a more advanced science in the use of that resource. American communists will continue that tradition to make ever more efficient use of our land for healthy and high-yield agriculture and the development of underutilized land. We will use advancements in urban planning, architecture and civil engineering to improve the quality and efficient use of our urban land.

The logic of revolutionary developmentalism demanded by our unique historical conditions will not necessitate increased expansion over land. Our basic infrastructure and continental markets are firmly established, but the cartel maintains them at only the limited capacity required to extract economic rent from their use. Our movement rests not on the extension of markets into new land, but on the improved use of land. For example, American property values are currently inflating as they are treated as a speculative asset. Suburban sprawl is increasingly less viable relative to vertically developed housing communities. Vertical farming is increasingly more efficient for urban markets than agricultural sprawl. This economic tendency towards efficient land use lays the groundwork to eventually use currently underutilized land for leisure, hunting, and ecological restoration. Even the habitats of endangered species like the mountain lion and buffalo will ultimately be restored by advancing our application of ecosystem sciences and monitoring technology. That which was erased by colonial capitalism will be restored as that mode of production is superseded.

In light of their necessary abandonment of large-scale resistance in the late 1880s and 1890s, Indigenous Americans reflected on the temporality of loss. A religion spread across the Indigenous nations of the Great Plains called the Ghost Dance. Wovoka the sage taught people how to participate in an intense multi-day ceremony in which they would be transported in a trance to another world where all that was lost had returned:

64. Andrew C. Isenberg, "Toward a Policy of Destruction: Buffaloes, Law and the Market, 1803-83," *Great Plains Quarterly* 12(4) (1992).

> *"Do not tell the white people about this. Jesus is now upon the earth. He appears like a cloud. The dead are all alive again. I do not know when they will be here; maybe this fall or in the spring. When the time comes there will be no more sickness and everyone will be young again."*[65]

The religion was a syncretization of European American and Indigenous American traditions. Wovoka presented a materialist outlook. He claims that a human subject which embodies the transcendental logic of historical development has once again become perceptible. Indigenous people's corporeal bodies would become healthy again at a concrete time in the future. He describes this future development as a nation forming:

> *"The whole world is coming, A nation is coming, a nation is coming, The Eagle has brought the message to the tribe. The father says so, the father says so. Over the whole earth they are coming. The buffalo are coming, the buffalo are coming, The Crow has brought the message to the tribe, The father says so, the father says so."*[66]

Wovoka saw a political community in the process of formation. There is an overlap here between the particular arrival of a nation and the universal arrival of the whole world. That which is arriving is something new, yet it restores populations and ways of life that have ancient roots in this land. American religions and cultural movements express the colloquial wisdom of the people reflecting upon their experience of intergenerational cycles of loss and renewal. Communists are the students of the people and their history.

Conclusion

This paper has applied a social-psychoanalytic method to historical-materialist analysis to yield insights into particular national characteristics. This particularity of analysis yielded particular tactics of labor organizing within the

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65. James Mooney, "Letter from Wovoka" (1890), *The Messiah Letter* reprinted in Digital History (2021).

66. "Ghost Dance Song (Ascribed to Wovoka, Northern Paiute Prophet)," in *Defining Moments: American Indian Removal and the Trail to Wounded Knee*, ch. 5 (Detroit: Omnigraphics, 2013), 64.

American context and identified effective narrative themes to communicate those tactics to a national audience.

From this portrait of socialism with American characteristics, we observed how an American communist movement restores what was lost during the real Wild West through what was portrayed in the Western film genre. From the restoration of the public ownership of American land, to identifying the transport worker as our revolutionary subject, we imbued the symbolic expression of the American class struggle with material content. This conscious traversal of the popular fantasy of the Wild West allows that ghostly imagery to be born again as a living reality in the real movement of history.

These ghosts are with us and they teach us. They are our ancestors, just like all Americans who fought and died over the course of centuries for the American civilization that still struggles to be born.

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